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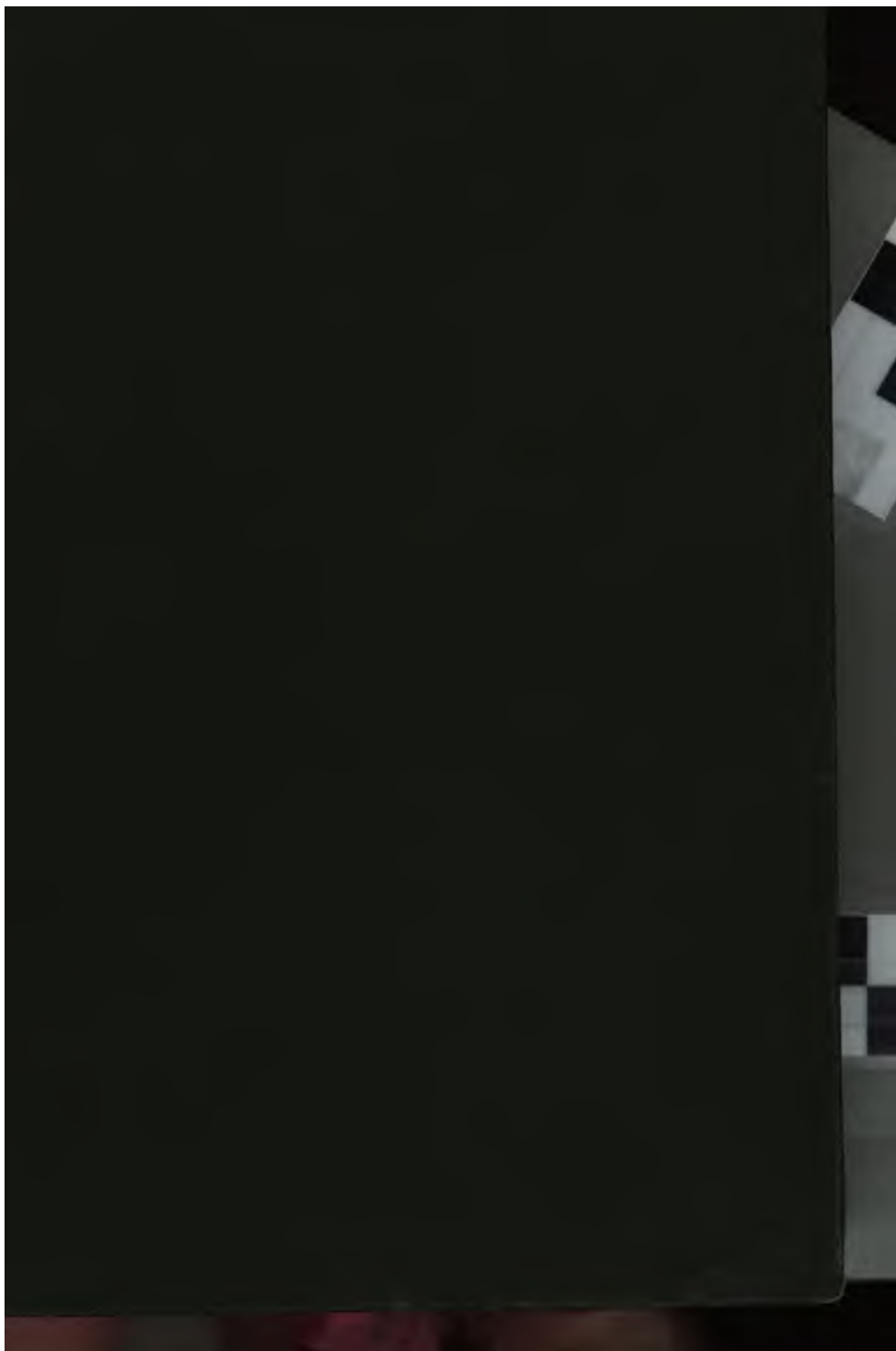
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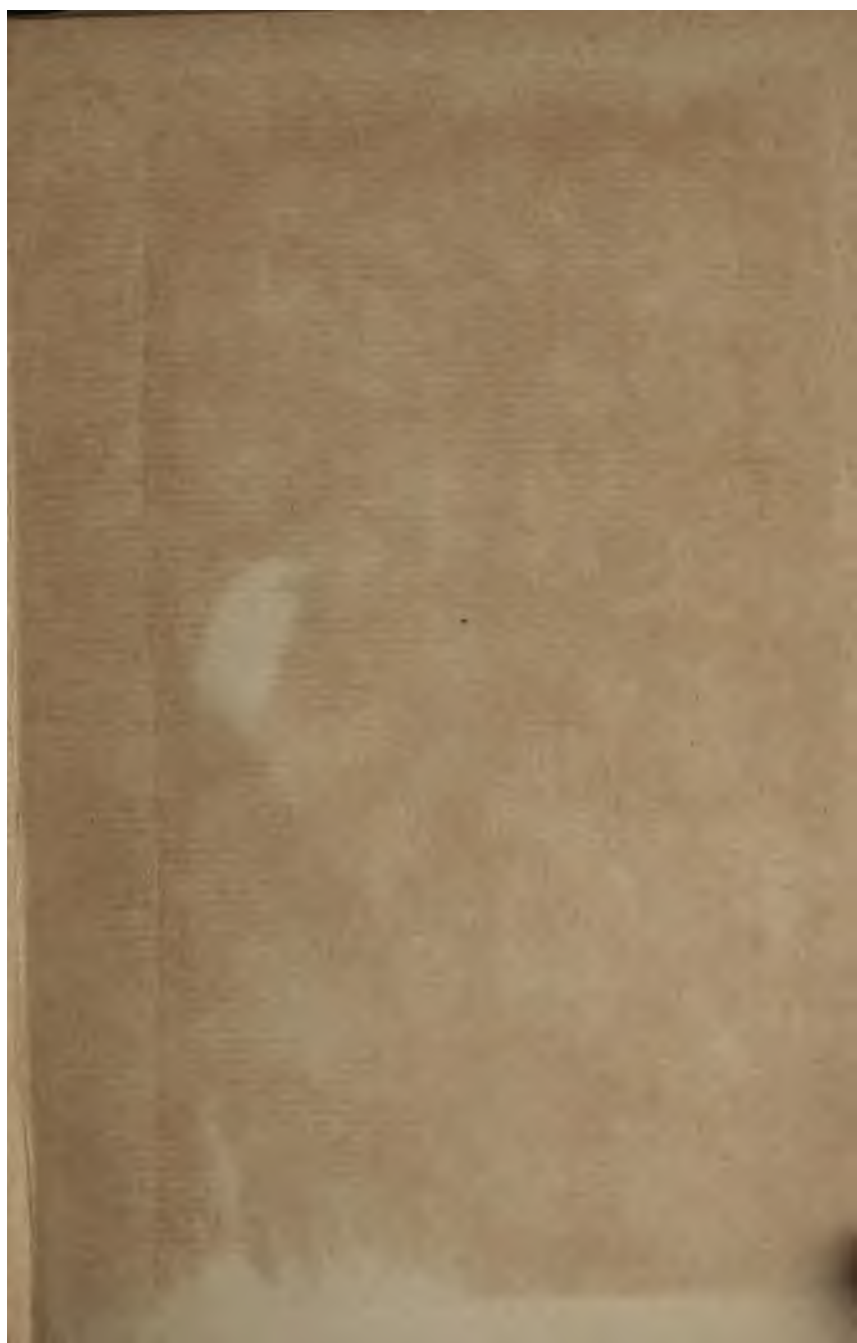
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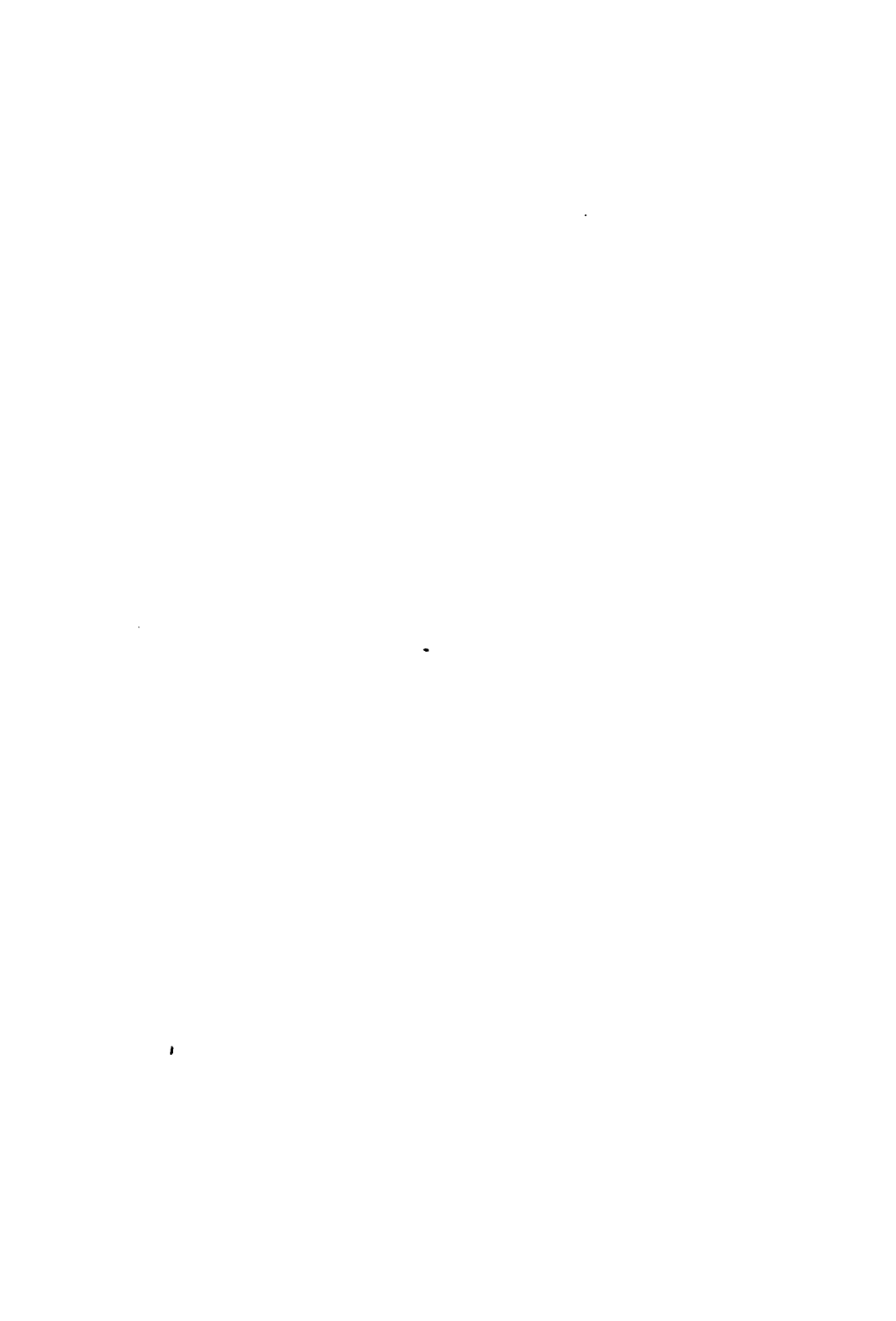


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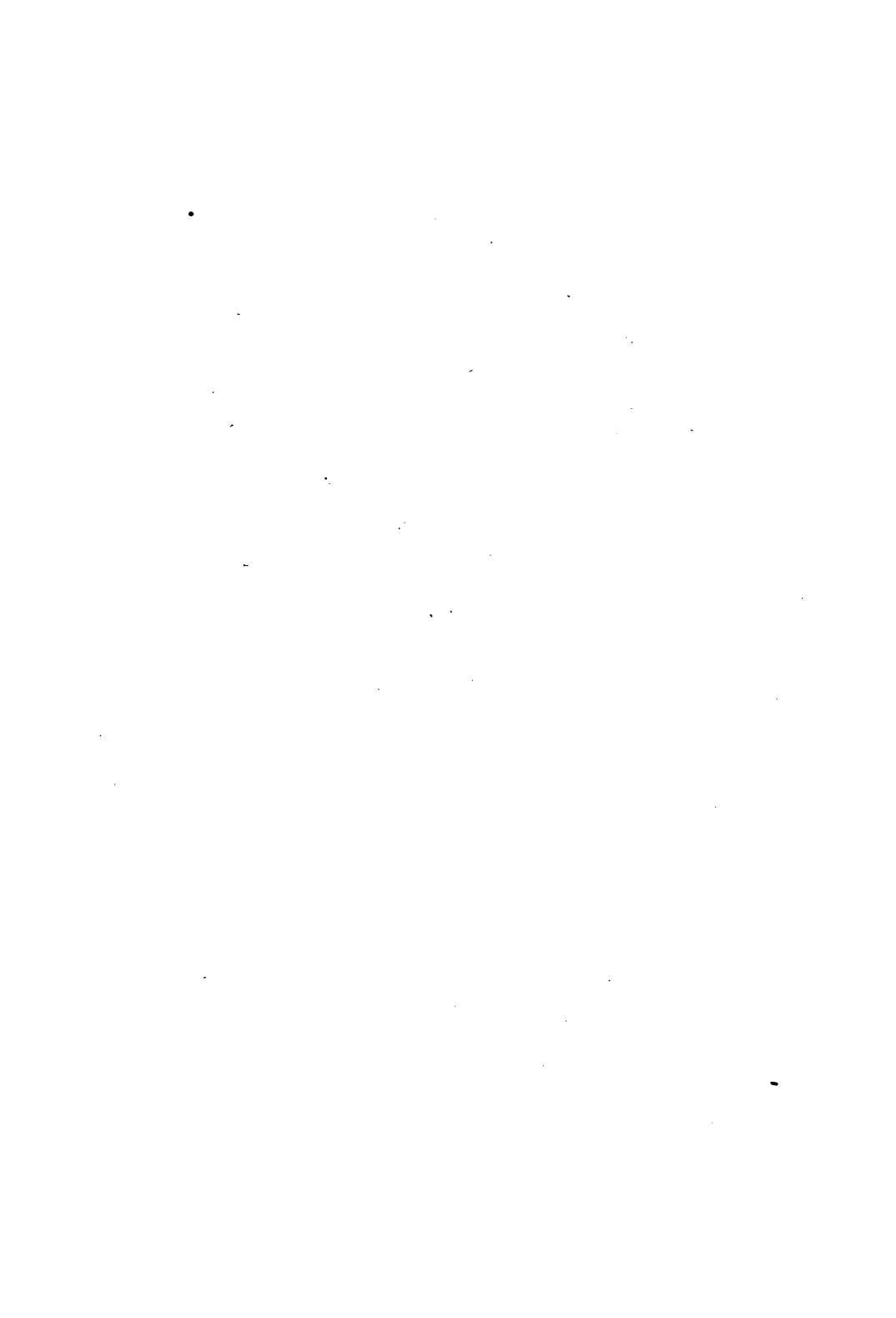




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TALES AND LEGENDS  
FROM  
THE LAND OF THE TZAR.





# TALES AND LEGENDS

FROM THE LAND OF

## THE T Z A R.

*COLLECTION OF RUSSIAN STORIES.*

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL RUSSIAN BY

EDITH M. S. HODGETTS.

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SECOND EDITION.

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**Dedication.**



TO THEIR EXCELLENCIES

MICHAEL NICOLAEVITCH AND SOPHIE NICOLAEVNA

DE KAPOUSTINE,

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE

TRANSLATOR, THEIR GOD-DAUGHTER,

EDITH.



## INTRODUCTION.

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IN presenting to the English Public this little volume of Russian stories, I give the result of some years' experience in Russia, where I was born, and where I spent my childhood. Some of these tales were dictated in the original Russian at school, others were related to me by my nurse and other servants of my father's household, while some are translations which I have made from various collections of Russian stories current among the people. Russian humour is peculiar, and it is not always easy to know whether Ivan is laughing *at* or *with* you. In this respect he resembles "Pat," whose affected simplicity is in nine cases out of ten a mere cloak for unfathomable shrewdness.

The perfect recklessness regarding possibility (to say nothing of probability) lends a special charm to the Russian story. Nothing stops the progress of events. The most startling phenomena occur in the most every-day sort of way, and none of the characters seem surprised at occurrences of which the bare narration almost deprives one of breath.

I hope that my work may not only prove amusing

to children, but interesting to students of folk-lore, who may be able to find some useful hints in these pages. They may be able to trace the connection between some of our own most beloved fairy tales and those of a country so little known in England as Russia.

EDITH HODGETTS.

*London, 1890.*

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# TALES AND LEGENDS

## FROM THE LAND OF THE TZAR.



### VASELESA THE BEAUTIFUL.

IN a certain kingdom there lived a very rich nobleman, with his wife and a beautiful daughter, named Vaselesa, whom all her friends called Vaselesa the Beautiful, on account of her loveliness and sweet ways. When she was but a child of eight, her mother became so dangerously ill that all the doctors gave her up, and said that she now lay on her death-bed. One day she called Vaselesa to her bedside, and, giving her a lovely little doll, said,—

“Listen to me, my child, and remember your mother’s dying words. I am about to depart this life for another, a brighter and far happier one. With a dying mother’s love do I leave you this doll, which is very different from others, for she is enchanted, keep her, my darling, and show her to no one, but when ill-luck befalls you, ask her to help you. Now farewell, Vaselesa ; be a good girl ; obey your father, love him and cheer him when in trouble. Good-bye, little one.” With these words the mother kissed her child and expired.

Some years after the death of his wife, the nobleman thought he had better marry again, on his child’s

account, for he loved his little daughter dearly, and wanted some one to take care of her, as he had very little time to do so himself.

Many women came in his way, yet he cared for none. At last a very rich widow took his fancy, with two rather pretty daughters, of Vaselesa's own age. He, thinking her a good house-wife, as well as a kind mother, married her ; but, alas ! she turned out to be a very different sort of woman ; and, like a good many step-mothers, disliked her step-daughter immensely. She hated Vaselesa because she was the most beautiful child on the whole face of the earth ! and because she was a good, obedient little girl. Her step-sisters, of course, very shortly began to hate her too ; they snubbed her, made her do all their work for them and tried to worry her in every possible way ; but all in vain, Vaselesa grew more beautiful every day, and did not seem to mind in the least all their snubbing, and all the hard work they made her do. Why was this ? Was it because she kept the doll which her mother had given her ? or was it the dying woman's blessing that kept her from harm ? We shall see by-and-by.

Years passed on, the beautiful Vaselesa was now old enough to be a bride. She was always surrounded by rich and handsome lovers, while the two step-sisters were left out in the cold, for no one looked at them when Vaselesa was near. Naturally, the step-mother became very angry, and told the young men that she would not let Vaselesa marry before her own daughters were comfortably settled. The young men on hearing this, departed in haste, and troubled the nobleman's house no more. The step-mother was

still more disgusted when she saw that she had turned them off altogether, and began to vent her rage on Vaselesa, calling her a flirt, telling her that she kept all the young men away from her sisters ; however, Vaselesa did not mind.

It so happened that the nobleman had to go to a very distant kingdom for some months, on very important business, while his wife moved to another house not quite so large as the first one, near a dark and dreary forest, in the middle of which stood a little hut, and in it lived an old witch, who was said to eat up everybody who came in her way, just as though they were so many chickens ! The step-mother had heard of this dreadful old witch, and thought if she kept on sending Vaselesa into the forest every day for something or other, she would soon be got rid of ; however, Vaselesa always came home safely, thanks to her friend the doll. But one evening the step-mother gave each of the girls some work to do, telling them to have a certain amount of it finished by the following morning. One had to begin making lace, the other to go on with her knitting, while Vaselesa had to spin. The step-mother, after giving them a small piece of candle to work by, left them, and went to spend the evening with some friends, not forgetting, however, to tell them that if the candle should go out, one of them would have to go to the witch for light, and she looked meaningly at Vaselesa. The girls worked a long time, and then the candle went out, leaving them in darkness.

“ What shall we do ? ” cried one of the step-sisters ;

“mamma has locked up all the light, and our work is not half done! As for going to Madam Witch, I shan't; I daresay I can manage to go on working by the gleam of my knitting-needles.”

“I shan't go either, I shall be able to finish this bit of lace by the light of my pins,” said the other.

“Vaselesa must go!”

And they pushed the poor girl out of the room, and locked the door after her. Vaselesa went straight to her own room, and told her doll what her sisters wanted her to do.

“Don't be afraid, my darling,” answered the doll, “but go wheresoever you are sent, and fear nothing. As long as you carry me about with you, you are safe.”

Vaselesa put the doll in her pocket, and ran out of the house into the forest, singing as she went. Suddenly a white horseman rode past her on a white horse, and as he rode everything around him became white. Vaselesa was greatly astonished at this, and began wondering what he could be, when another horseman rode past, clad in red, sitting on a red horse, and as he rode along everything became red; but he, too, soon disappeared. After she had walked a little farther, she met another horseman, dressed in black, on a black horse, and immediately all became quite dark round about her.

Vaselesa had now not far to go, but very soon arrived at the little hut where Madam Witch lived. This hut and its surroundings were most peculiar as well as alarming; in the first place, the hut itself stood on chickens' legs, and round it was a high wall

made of human bones, on the top of which was a collection of human skulls, lighted up inside, with rays of light streaming out of the eyes, showing Vaselesa the way. On the gate were human legs instead of bolts, and human hands instead of a lock. Vaselesa became greatly alarmed on seeing all these dreadful things, and would gladly have run away, had she not heard a loud noise in the air, and, on looking up, beheld the old witch riding on a mortar, with a pestle in her hand.

"Fy, fy! I smell the blood of a Russian. Who is here?" she cried, descending.

Vaselesa came forward, saying in a low, trembling voice,—

"It is I, madam, my step-sisters have sent me to you for light."

"All right, my child," cried the witch. "I know them well! So they want light, do they? Very well; but you will have to work for me first, and stay here for a little while. If you do everything well, and are a good girl, I shall give you one of those lighted skulls to take back to your sisters."

"But I beg your pardon, madam," said Vaselesa again, "my sisters are *waiting* for the light; they want to finish some work for their mother."

"No, they are not doing anything of the kind; they only wanted to get rid of you."

"I am sure you must be mistaken, madam. I know that they are waiting."

"Well, let them wait; do them good. As for my being mistaken, not I! Anyhow, I don't let people have my skulls for nothing. You will have to stay

with me and work, and if you do everything properly, as I mentioned before, I shall give you a skull ; on the other hand, if you do not do what I tell you, your head will be put on that wall with the rest, for there happens to be a vacancy."

Vaselesa did not at all like the prospect of possessing one of the things she had so greatly dreaded, nor did she care *very* much about the invitation, or the look of things in general ; however, she wisely said nothing, but followed the witch into the hut.

"Bring me all that there is in the stove," said the witch, "and put it down on the table before me, for I am as hungry as a wolf."

"Then I hope you will not eat *me* up!"

"I will, if you don't make haste."

Vaselesa laughed, and, running to the stove, brought out everything there. This was chiefly human flesh ! She brought out some honey and wine, which the witch at once consumed, giving Vaselesa now and then something which she herself did not care for. After telling Vaselesa to be up early next morning, she went to bed.

Early next morning Vaselesa woke, and, peeping out of the window, saw the light in the skulls slowly darken. As she stood there looking out, the same white horseman rode past, and immediately everything became quite light. Madam Witch rose, telling Vaselesa to clean the yard, sweep the hut, cook the dinner, and peel a hundred pounds of potatoes ; but if this were not done, she told her that she would eat her up, and have no mercy on her. After that she went into the yard, said something that Vaselesa did

not understand, and the mortar with the pestle descended from the clouds; up went the witch high into the air, and was out of sight in a moment, leaving Vaselesa alone in her glory. She at once set to work to explore her surroundings, when she suddenly recollected the work she had to do; so she ran to begin, when what was her surprise to see that the doll had done it all for her!

"Oh, my darling little helper!" cried Vaselesa. "You have saved me all the trouble. What on earth should I have done without you?"

"You have still to lay the table for dinner, and be a good girl. Remember that, and try to please Madam Witch in every possible way."

So saying, the doll climbed into Vaselesa's pocket.

All was quite ready when Madam Witch arrived. She found everything beautifully clean and cheerful.

"Have you done all the work I gave you to do?" she asked on entering.

"Look and answer for yourself, good mother," returned Vaselesa, smiling brightly.

The witch gave a quick look round, and, I must say, was not altogether pleased, for there was no fault to find whatever.

"It is very well done, my child," she said, sitting down to her dinner.

After she had eaten enough she went to bed, telling Vaselesa what she had to do next day.

When morning came, Madam Witch rode out in her mortar, with the pestle in her hand; while Vaselesa, or rather the doll, did all the work. The day passed as did the first. When night came the



witch returned, and had, as before, no fault to find. As she was eating her dinner Vaselesa stood quite quietly by her side, looking at her, but saying nothing.

“Why do you not speak to me to-day, my child?” the witch asked in surprise.

“Because I was thinking.”

“What was it? Out with it.”

“Well, to tell the truth, I am rather puzzled about something, and want to ask you some questions, and shall be very glad if you will answer them for me.”

“Fire away; but, mind, not too many questions, or you will soon get old.”

“I only want to ask you three questions. First, as I was coming to you for light, a white horseman passed me on the way. He sat on a white horse, and all around him became white. Who was he?”

“His name was Day.”

“Then came another horseman clad in red. Who was he?”

“He was Sunset.”

“Then a third passed me, in black. Who was he?”

“He was Night.”

Vaselesa remained silent for some time.

“Well,” asked the witch, laughing, “have you no more to ask me about?”

“No. You yourself told me not to ask too much, for fear of my growing old before my time.”

“Very well, then. Now that you have asked me all you wish to know, I will return the compliment, and ask you some questions too. Tell me why it is that you are always so good, and so quick and ready to obey me, and never make a mistake by any

chance? And also why it is that I am so fond of you, and would not hurt a hair of your head?"

"I suppose it is my dear mother's blessing that helps me in all I do."

"Well, then, look here, my dear. I don't want any blessedness in *my* hut. I think you have been here quite long enough; so you had better go back to your step-mother and sisters with my compliments, and take one of my skulls with you."

So saying, the witch gave Vaselesa one of the horrid-looking things, and saw her off.

Away ran the girl, thinking the witch quite the most charming old lady she had ever met. It was growing very dark now, and had it not been for the lighted skull she would never have found her way. She ran on until Day broke in upon her, and the skull darkened; but as soon as Night galloped past the skull lighted up again, showing Vaselesa the way.

On the following evening she arrived at the gates of her home. All was in total darkness. She was about to throw away the lighted skull and enter the house, when suddenly, to her great surprise, a voice like thunder came from the skull, saying,—

"Throw me not away, but take me unto thy step-mother!"

She looked up at the window, and seeing that there was no light anywhere, she took the skull in with her. Her people went out of their way to be as nice as possible. They embraced her tenderly, telling her that they had been in utter darkness during the evenings the moment she had left them. Whatever light was brought to them, went out immediately.

"I hope your light will not go out, too!" cried the step-mother, as she set down the skull on a little table in a corner.

"I hardly think that likely," replied Vaselesa.

Meanwhile the fiery eyes pierced the step-mother and step-sisters with the hot flames that now and then darted out from them. The three women were terribly frightened, and tried to hide themselves in corners so as to save themselves from being burnt, but all in vain; they became so fearfully scorched by dreadful flames from the eyes, that towards morning they were nothing but a heap of ashes. All this time the flaming eyes never once so much as looked at Vaselesa, who stood there unable to help her step-mother and sisters.

After burying the skull in the earth she locked up the house, gave the servants a holiday, and went to live with an old woman in town, who was formerly her nurse, where she could wait for her father's return.

One day Vaselesa said to the old woman,—

"I find it very dull, Ivanna, sitting here like a grand lady, without having any work to do; I wish you would let me help you sometimes in the house-work."

"But why, dear angel, should you want to spoil your pretty hands with work?"

"Well, Ivanna, I don't want to live idle. If you won't let me help you, I wish you would buy me some of the very best flax you can get, and I will spin."

The old nurse sighed, but had to obey.

Vaselesa set to work and began to spin. Her

work was so fine, that when the time came to weave it nobody would touch it for fear of breaking it.

Vaselesa was very unhappy, and tried to do it herself, but failed. So she went to her doll and asked it to do it for her. Next morning all was done!

Never did human eyes see such beautiful stuff. In fact, it was so much admired that Vaselesa (or rather, her doll) set to work and made some beautiful linen which could almost pass through the eye of the smallest needle! When it was all ready Vaselesa told her nurse to try to sell the stuff, and keep the money for herself.

"Why, my dear child," said the old nurse, looking at the linen in surprise, "this is fit for no one but the king himself! I will take it to him at once. Why it is more like silk than linen!"

Off went the old woman to the palace, and asked to see the king, who ordered her to be brought before him at once. He was delighted with the stuff, and asked the price of it.

"I will let your Majesty have it for nothing."

However, the king would not hear of this, but gave her many rich gifts in return.

Shortly after, the king ordered shirts to be made for him of this beautiful linen, but nobody would touch it. They said it was quite impossible to cut or sew it, as it was much too fine for any human hands to finger. The king then ordered the old woman to come before him.

"You could spin and weave this linen," said the king, "therefore you will also have to make me these shirts, as no one in the kingdom will touch the stuff."

"I did not make the linen, your Majesty, but a beautiful young lady who is staying with me did it by way of amusement."

"Well, then, let her make the shirts. Some one must make them, now that I have got the linen."

Away went the old nurse, and told Vaselesa all that the king had said.

"I knew that would be the case ; no one has the patience to touch this stuff. It is too fine, I suppose," laughed Vaselesa, as she locked herself up in her room. Of course she did not think for a moment of making these shirts herself, but told her little doll to do so. (How convenient that doll was to be sure!)

In a very short time three dozen shirts lay by her side, so charmingly worked that it was quite impossible to see the sewing!

Next morning the old nurse took the shirts to the king, who was simply delighted with them, and would not rest until he saw this wonderful girl who did everything that no one else could do.

Meanwhile Vaselesa, after dressing herself in a beautiful satin dress, looking like a rose freshly plucked from the garden, sat by the open window as though waiting for something. Suddenly she heard the sound of wheels ; she looked up, and saw one of the king's carriages drive up to the door. Vaselesa flew to answer the bell.

"Does the young lady who made the king's shirts live here?" asked a footman with powdered hair.

Vaselesa told him that she was the one. So off she drove to the palace ; but no sooner had she made her appearance at court when all eyes were turned

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to her, full of surprise at her wonderful beauty. As for the king himself, he fell straightway in love with her, and in a very short time they were married. As the king happened to be young and handsome, Vaselesa did not object.

Vaselesa's father soon returned, and was overjoyed at the news. He lived the rest of his days with his beloved daughter and the king, her husband.

The old woman was properly taken care of, and lived in a nice little house close to the palace, where she could see Vaselesa as often as she pleased.

The beautiful young queen became more lovely every day, and kept the doll carefully locked up to the end of her days, and showed it to no one for fear of its getting broken.

### THE SILVER PLATE AND THE TRANSPARENT APPLE.

THERE lived once a peasant with his wife and three daughters. Two of these girls were not particularly beautiful, while the third was sweetly pretty. However, as she happened to be a very good girl, as well as simple in her tastes, she was nicknamed Simpleton, and all who knew her called her by that name, though she was in reality far from being one. Her sisters thought of nothing but dress and jewellery: the consequence was that they did not agree with their younger sister. They teased her, mimicked her, and made her do all the hard work. Yet Simpleton never said a word of complaint, but was ready to do anything. She fed the cows and the poultry; if any one asked her to bring anything she brought it in a moment; in fact, she was a most obliging young person.

One day the peasant had to go to a big fair to sell hay; so he asked his two eldest daughters what he should bring them.

"Bring me some red fustian to make myself a sarafan,"<sup>1</sup> said the eldest.

"Buy me some yards of nankeen to make myself a dress," said the second.

<sup>1</sup> A coat without sleeves.

Simpleton meanwhile sat in a corner looking at her sisters with great eagerness. Though she was a simpleton, her father found it hard to go away without asking her what she would like him to bring her ; so he asked her too.

“Bring me, dear father,” said she, “a silver plate and a transparent apple to roll about on it.”

The father was rather astonished. But he said nothing and left.

“Whatever made you ask for such rubbish ?” asked her sisters laughing.

“You will see for yourselves when my father brings them,” said Simpleton, as she left the room.

The peasant, after having sold his hay, bought his daughters the things they had asked for, and drove home.

The two elder girls were delighted with their presents, and laughed at Simpleton, waiting to see what she intended doing with the silver plate and transparent apple. Simpleton did not eat the apple, as they at first thought she would, but sat in a corner pronouncing these words,—

“Roll away, apple, roll away, on this silver plate ; show me different towns, fields, and woods, the seas, the heights of the hills, and the heavens in all their glory.”

Away rolled the apple, and on the plate became visible, towns, one after another ; ships were seen sailing on the seas ; green fields were seen ; the heights of the hills were shown ; the beauty of the heavens and the setting of the sun were all displayed most wonderfully.



The sisters looked on in amazement. They longed to have it for themselves, and wondered how they could best get it from Simpleton, for she took such great care of it, and would take nothing in exchange.

At last one day the wicked sisters said coaxingly to Simpleton,—

“Come with us, dear, into the forest, and help us pick strawberries.”

Simpleton gave the plate and the apple to her father to take care of, and joined her sisters. When they arrived at the forest they set to work picking wild strawberries. After some time the two elder sisters suddenly came upon a spade lying on the grass. They seized it, and while Simpleton was not looking they gave her a heavy blow with the spade. She turned ghastly pale, and fell dead on the ground. They took her up quickly, buried her under a birch-tree, and went home late to their parents, saying,—

“Simpleton has run away from us. We looked for her everywhere, but cannot find her ; she must have been eaten up by some wild beasts, while we were not looking.”

The father, who really had a little love for the girl, became very sad, and actually cried. He took the plate and apple, and locked them both up carefully in a glass case. The sisters also cried very much, and pretended to be very sorry, though the real reason was that they found out that they were not likely to have the transparent apple and plate after all, but would have to do all the hard work themselves.

One day a shepherd, who was minding a flock of sheep, happened to lose one, and went into the forest

to look for it. When suddenly he came upon a hillock under a birch-tree, round which grew a number of red and blue flowers, and among them a reed.

The young shepherd cut off the reed, and made himself a pipe ; but what was his astonishment when the moment he put the pipe to his mouth, it began to play by itself, saying,—

“Play, play, little pipe ; comfort my dear parents, and my sisters, who so cruelly misused me, killed me, and buried me, for the sake of my silver plate and transparent apple.”

The shepherd ran into the village greatly alarmed, and a crowd of people soon collected round him asking him what had happened. The shepherd again put the pipe to his mouth, and again the pipe began to play of itself.

“Who killed whom, and where, and how ?” asked all the people together, crowding round.

“Good people,” answered the shepherd, “I know no more than you do. All I know is, that I lost one of my sheep, and went in search of it, when I suddenly came upon a hillock under a birch-tree with flowers round it, and among them was a reed, which I cut off and made into a pipe, and the moment I put the thing into my mouth it began to play of itself, and pronounce the words which you have just heard.”

It so happened that Simpleton’s father and sisters were among the crowd, and heard what the shepherd said.

“Let me try your pipe,” said the father, taking it and putting it into his mouth ; and immediately it began to repeat the words,—

“Play, play, little pipe ; comfort my dear parents, and my sisters, who misused, killed, and buried me for the sake of the silver plate and transparent apple.”

The peasant made the shepherd take him to the hillock at once. When they got to it they began to dig open the hillock, where they found the dead body of the unfortunate girl. The father fell on his knees before it, and tried to bring her back to life, but all in vain. The people again began asking who it was that killed and buried her, whereupon the pipe replied,—

“My sisters took me into the forest and slew me for the silver plate and transparent apple. If you want to wake me from this sound slumber, you must bring me the water of life from the royal fountain.”

The two miserable sisters turned pale, and wanted to run away, whereupon the people seized them, tied them together, and marched them off to a dark cell, where they locked them up until the king should pronounce judgment on them.

The peasant went to the palace, and was brought before the king’s son, and falling upon his knees before the prince, he related the whole story. Whereupon the king’s son told him to take as much of the water of life from the royal fountain as he pleased.

“When your daughter is well, bring her to me,” continued the prince, “and also her evil-minded sisters.”

The peasant was delighted. He thanked the young prince, and ran to the forest with the water of life. After he had sprinkled the body several times with

the water, his daughter woke up, and stood before him, prettier than ever. They embraced each other tenderly, while the people rejoiced and congratulated the happy man.

Next morning the peasant went with his three daughters to the palace, and was brought before the king's son.

The young prince, when he beheld Simpleton, was greatly struck with her beauty, and asked her at once to show him the silver plate and transparent apple.

"What would your Highness like to see?" asked the girl, bringing forward her treasures. "Would you like to know whether your kingdom is in good order, or if your ships are sailing, or whether there is any curious comet in the heavens?"

"Anything you like, sweet maiden."

Away rolled the apple round about the plate, on which became visible soldiers of different arms, with muskets and flags, drawn up in battle array. The apple rolled on, and waves rose, and ships were seen sailing about like swans, while flags waved in the air. On rolled the apple, and on the plate the glory of the heavens was displayed; the sun, moon, and stars, and various comets were seen.

The king's son was greatly astonished, and offered to buy the plate and apple; but Simpleton fell on her knees before him, exclaiming,—

"Take my silver plate and my apple. I want no money and no gifts for them, if you will only promise to forgive my sisters."

The young prince was so moved by her pretty face and her tears, that he at once forgave the two wicked

girls. Simpleton was so overjoyed that she threw her arms round their necks and tenderly embraced them.

The king's son took Simpleton by the hand and said, "Sweet maiden, I am so struck by the great kindness you have shown your sisters after their cruel treatment of you, that I have decided (provided you agree to it) to have you for my wife, and you shall be known henceforth as the *Benevolent Queen*."

"Your highness does me great honour," said Simpleton, blushing; "but it lies in my parents' hands. If they do not object, I will marry you."

It is needless to say that neither parents objected, but gave their consent and blessing.

"I have one more request to ask your Highness," said Simpleton. "And that is, to let my parents and sisters live with us in the palace."

The young prince made no objection whatever to this proposal (though most probably he felt sorry for it afterwards; however, the story does not say anything about that). The sisters threw themselves at Simpleton's feet, exclaiming that they did not deserve such kindness after all that they had said and done to her.

Next day the marriage was celebrated, and crowds of people ran about everywhere crying out, "Long live our king and queen!"

From that day *Simpleton* was no more, but the BENEVOLENT QUEEN reigned in her stead.

## THE SOLDIER AND THE DEMONS.

A FAITHFUL soldier, having served his master for many a long year, received his pay, and was on his way to his native land. He had to go through many kingdoms ; at last he stopped in one, and came to the house of an old woman.

“How are things getting on in your country ?” he asked ; “is everything well ?”

“Not quite, soldier,” she answered. “You see, our king has a daughter, who is very beautiful—Princess Martha we call her. Well, a foreign prince came to our country, and made her an offer of marriage ; but our princess refused him, and a good job too ; the wretch flew into a dreadful rage, and let a number of demons loose upon her. It is already the third year that this has been going on, and the poor dear princess has not slept once all the time on account of these little demons, but cries out in despair all night long.”

“Can no one do anything for her ?”

“No, soldier ; the king has tried everything in his power to save her from the evil spirits, and many a man has been brought to the palace to try and drive away the demons, but all in vain ; no one can do anything.”

“Well,” said the soldier, “I will go and try *my*

luck; perhaps I can do something for the princess, and maybe the king will give me the means for my journey home if I am successful."

So saying, he took off his cloak, cleaned his buttons, and marched off to the king.

"Good day, soldier," said the king; "what news have you brought?"

"I wish your daughter better, your Majesty. I hear that Princess Martha is very ill; perhaps I can do something for her, and get rid of the demons in some way."

"Very well, brother; if you do that you shall be handsomely rewarded."

"But I can do nothing unless your Majesty will promise to supply me with certain things that I may want."

"Say what it is you require, soldier, and I shall take care that you have it."

"Well, your Majesty, I shall first of all want a bushel of iron bullets, a bushel of nuts, a pound of candles, two packs of cards, an iron rod, and last, but not least, a figure of a man in iron, on springs. That is all I require."

"All, indeed! Quite enough too, I can tell you. However, if you really think you can save my daughter, you shall have everything you wish, and more."

Next day everything was ready, the soldier, after closing all the windows and all the doors, with the exception of one which he left open, made the sign of the cross over them; he then illuminated the princess's room with the candles; on the table he put

the two packs of cards ; and then filled his pockets with the iron bullets and nuts. After that he went to the open door and waited. Presently, just at midnight, a number of unclean spirits approached the palace, but were greatly disgusted to find that they could not get in. At last, one of them, on seeing the open door, changed itself into a man, and was about to walk in.

“Who goes there ?” called out the soldier.

“Let me in, brother, I am only one of the court footmen.”

“Then where have you been loitering about at this time of night, you rascal ?”

“Wherever I may have been, I am not there now ; that is certain. Give us a drink, old boy.”

“Give you a drink, indeed ! What do you take me for ?”

“Well, at any rate, you might have the politeness to give me some of your nuts. I see you have plenty in your pockets.”

“Here you are, you impudent rascal ;” said the soldier, giving him an iron bullet.

The demon took it, and it is needless to say that he found great difficulty in cracking it ; meanwhile the soldier cracked five and twenty nuts, and ate them.

“How awfully hard your nuts are, soldier,” said the demon ; “and what tremendously strong teeth you must have to be able to crack them !”

“What a poor sort of chap *you* must be, to be sure. Why *I* have lived fifty-five years with the king, and am an old man now ; in fact, I was no chicken when I came ; and have hardly a tooth in my head ; and



those that I have are as blunt as they can possibly be! You ought to have seen me when I was *young*. I had the most wonderful teeth then, and so beautifully white that everybody used to talk about them."

The demon coughed.

"Suppose we have a game at cards," said he, taking up a pack.

"What shall we play for?"

"Money, of course."

"Money, indeed! what money can a soldier have? You stupid. Why he never has more than three kopeks at the most to bless himself with. No, my friend, let us rather play for blows; that is what we soldiers do."

"Right you are!" And they began their game.

"Now for the blows, soldier," said the demon.

"No," answered the soldier, "wait till the knave of clubs turns up, then you can strike, otherwise it is not worth while exciting yourself."

"Agreed!" cried the demon; and they went on playing.

It was the soldier's turn to strike.

"Now then," said he, "present your forehead, and let me show you what we soldiers can do in the way of blows! You will not forget them in a hurry, I can tell you!"

The demon fell on his knees, and begged the soldier to have mercy on him, and not to strike too hard.

"Get along with your impudence!" cried the soldier.

"Oh, soldier! take as much of my money as you like, only let me off the blows."

"What use would your money be to me? I don't want it. I played for blows, and not for your stupid money! However, if you like, I have got a younger brother; let us go to him. He may not give you such hard blows as I; but, of course, if you do not wish to go to him, I must give them to you myself."

"No! no! take me to your younger brother, by all means!"

So the soldier marched him off to the iron man. He touched the springs, and the iron man gave the unfortunate demon a blow which sent him spinning to the other side of the room. The soldier stopped him.

"Remember," he said, "you are still to receive nine blows. You have only had one. Come along."

But the demon had evidently had enough, for he jumped up and made off as best he could.

In the morning the king came and asked Princess Martha how she had passed the night.

"Very well, thank you, father dear," she answered; "no one disturbed me at all."

On the following night the demons came again to the palace, in order to torment the princess, but finding everything closed except that one door, one of them went in. But it was *not* our friend of the night before. This demon had also the pleasure of seeing the soldier, and conversing with him, and receiving an equally warm welcome.

Well, this went on for thirteen nights, each night bringing a different demon to the palace; and as each

unfortunate little demon received the same kind of treatment from the soldier and his younger brother, they at last struck work, and would go near the palace no more.

“Well, nephews,” said the head-demon, “as none of you seem to care about visiting this soldier, *I* shall go myself.”

And with a very haughty air he entered the palace. He soon got on very friendly terms with the soldier, and after a while they both began a game at cards, in which, of course, the soldier managed to win. The soldier then took the head-demon and presented him to his younger brother. The iron man, after having his springs touched, caught the demon very affectionately in his iron hands, and held him firmly, while the soldier seized the iron rod, and began beating the unfortunate demon most unmercifully, saying,—

“This will cure you of tormenting the princess!”

At last the rod broke in halves over the demon’s back.

“Oh, nephews, that soldier has very nearly beaten me to death!” exclaimed the demon, when he had at length joined his band.

“Well, uncle; at any rate you saw for yourself what an ingenious man that soldier is,” said one.

“It is a fortnight since I had the pleasure of going to the palace and making his acquaintance, and my head still aches from the warm welcome I received. I only thank my stars that he did not beat me himself, but made his younger brother do it.”

The demons then held a meeting, and began discussing how they could best get the soldier out of the

palace. At last, after a great deal of talking and thinking, they decided to give him (the soldier) all their gold, and coax him out of the place. Off ran the demons to the soldier, who, when he saw them all coming together, was seriously alarmed, and cried out in a loud voice,—

“Run away, brothers, as fast as ever you can, some creditors are coming this way, and if they catch sight of you they will give you more soldier-blows, worse than those my little brother gave you ; so if you don’t want to get killed, run for your lives.”

“Enough, soldier! we have only come to pay our respects, and thank you for the kind way in which you received us every night, and also to offer you as much gold as you like, on condition that you leave this palace, and promise to trouble it no more with your presence.”

The soldier thought for a moment before answering them.

“No,” he replied at last ; “gold is of no use to me, but if you *really* do wish me to leave the palace, I have an idea, which won’t deprive you of your gold, and which I think will prove very satisfactory.”

“What is it, soldier? What is it?” cried the delighted little demons.

“Well, just get into my knapsack, every blessed one of you ; it is not a very difficult task.”

“Yes! yes! but what then?”

“What then?—why, after you have all got in, so that I can close it up, you can, after a time—get out again, that’s all.”

“Oh, all right! open your knapsack, brother, and let us jump in! Hooray!!”

And the little demons, overwhelmed with joy, turned somersaults in the air and sprang into the knapsack one after another, thinking all the while that it was such an easy and simple way of doing business.

“Lie more together, or I shall not be able to fasten the buckles.”

“Shut it up now,” said one little devil, “it *is* rather a tight fit, but what matters if we can get you away, a little squeezing won’t hurt us very much, and it certainly won’t harm *you*; so close it up, sharp!”

“That’s easier said than done; but one thing is certain, if I can’t fasten it up, you won’t get *me* out of the palace in a hurry.”

“Oh, shut up your mouth, as well as your knapsack! If you wouldn’t talk half so much, you would be more likely to finish your—”

But the little demon could not finish his sentence, as the soldier gave the knapsack a good shake just then, and succeeded in closing it. A little yell from the inmates inside followed, but the soldier, taking no notice, with a self-satisfied smile, threw the knapsack over his shoulders, and marched off to the king.

“Would your Majesty be so good as to order thirty iron hammers, each weighing half a ton.”

The king whistled; nevertheless he gave the order, and very soon the hammers were ready. The soldier took the knapsack to a blacksmith’s shop, put it on the anvil, and asked the blacksmith to beat it as hard

as he could with the iron hammers ; this done, the soldier took up the knapsack and again went before the king.

“ My task is done, your Majesty,” he said ; “ the evil spirits will torment the princess no more.”

The king was delighted.

“ You are a clever fellow ; go, therefore, and make merry in all the taverns in my kingdom ; do whatever you please, everything will be open to you.”

After making merry for a whole month, the soldier returned to the king.

“ I have enjoyed myself thoroughly, your Majesty, and now I want to continue my journey home-wards.”

“ But why not stay with me, soldier, and become one of my courtiers ? ”

“ Your Majesty is most kind, but I should like to return to my native land ; I have not been there for many a year, and wish to see some of my friends and relations again.”

“ Well, be off, and God bless you.”

The king, as a reward for all that the soldier had done, gave him carriages, horses, and more money than he could well spend, however long he might live.

Off went our soldier to his native land, and on his way he met with an old friend of his.

“ Good day, brother ! ” cried the soldier.

“ Holloa, old boy ! how are you ? ” asked the other.

“ Just as of old, my friend ; only Providence sent some luck in my way, and I am a rich man now, thank goodness ; so come, let us make merry, old boy ;

go you and fetch some wine, while I go to your hut and make myself known to your women-folk."

"I should be delighted, old fellow, but my cattle are not housed yet, worse luck, or I should go; but as I can't, I must trouble you to fetch it yourself, the tavern is only just round the corner."

"All right; but first I want to get rid of my knapsack. Would you mind taking it to your hut, and putting it down somewhere carefully; and tell your wife on no account to open it."

His friend took the knapsack into his hut; telling his wife, and some other women who happened to be there, to take care of it but not to open it, whilst he went to house the cattle. But the women could not withstand the temptation.

"Let us open this knapsack, and see what is in it!"

They had hardly undone it, when out jumped the demons, making a tremendous noise, breaking all the windows and door, and then ran off as hard as ever they could. But on their way they met their enemy the soldier.

"Oh, you wicked ones!" he cried; "so you are loose again, are you?"

On hearing his voice, the demons were greatly alarmed, and in their endeavours to get away from their enemy, threw themselves under a mill, where they remain to this day.

Our soldier went back to the hut, scolded the women well for not having obeyed him, and after spending a jolly day with his old friend, he travelled home to his native land, where he is now living in happiness, peace, and plenty.

## THE WONDERFUL TRADE.

IN a certain kingdom there lived an old woman who was almost penniless. She had an only son, whom she wished to apprentice where he would not be required to work, but only eat, sleep, and wear fine clothes. But, unfortunately, such places were scarce, and whenever she told her wishes to others they only laughed at her, saying,—

“You will have to go right round the world first, and then you won’t get what you want! No one would be such a fool!”

The old woman was highly indignant, and said she was not going to be *done*; so after selling all she had, which, needless to say, was very little, she turned to her son and told him to get ready, and they would start off to seek their fortunes.

They travelled from one town to another, but nobody seemed inclined to take the son into such apprenticeship as she wanted, especially without money.

They went through the whole kingdom without any success. At last the old woman, finding that her search was fruitless, decided to turn homewards once more, not in the highest spirits, when suddenly they came upon a man, who, seeing that the old woman looked very sad, asked her the reason.



"How can I be otherwise?" replied she. "I have walked and walked through the whole kingdom with my son, to bind him apprentice to a trade where he need do no work, only eat, drink, sleep, and dress well; but nobody will have him without money."

"Give him to me," said the stranger, "and on this day three years hence you may come and fetch him away. For teaching him I will take nothing; but mind you recognize him again; if you don't, you can come twice more after three years; but if you do not know him then, he must be mine for ever."

The old woman thought this very extraordinary. Was it possible not to know her own child again? However, she was glad that she had at any rate found some one who would take him; she could return to her own country and laugh at the people who had once laughed at her. It was not a very Christian way of looking at things, but, nevertheless, so thought the old woman. In her joy she forgot to ask this stranger who he was and where he lived, but gave him her son and left, to return after three long years to that very spot to claim her boy.

Now this stranger was a sorcerer. All his companions having died, he alone was left with his daughter to perform his magic arts. He kept a school, in which he taught the most wonderful things possible to some dozen young men who boarded with him.

The three years passed away very rapidly, and at last the important day arrived when the old woman was once more to behold her beloved son, and take him home with her. She got up very early, and

went to the place where she had first met the stranger. The time approached, and with it the sorcerer.

“Ah, little mother! I see you have not forgotten to fetch your boy.”

He gave two loud whistles, and in another moment twelve bees came buzzing round the old woman, who was terribly frightened, and began waving her hands about to keep them off.

“Don’t be afraid, little mother,” said the sorcerer, laughing, “for your son is among them. I have taught him all kinds of clever things, and if you really want him back you must try and find him.”

“Find him, indeed! why, I gave you a boy; and these are only a lot of horrid bees! Why, good man, do you want to make such a fool of me? Don’t you think I know the difference between a boy and a bee?”

“These are not bees really, but twelve young men, who, like your son, wished to have the same easy kind of apprenticeship. They fell into my hands, and have been taught all kinds of cunning and wonderful things; one of the things being, that they can change themselves into whatever they wish, whenever they please. Eleven of these are staying with me for ever, because their parents did not succeed in recognizing them, and—”

“I should think not,” exclaimed the old woman. “This is the greatest fraud I ever came across, and you ought to be punished for cheating a poor old woman like me.”

“Hush! don’t speak like that, little mother. I

was just going to tell you that your son is the twelfth, and if you don't recognize him he must stay with me like the others."

"But, great heavens, how can I possibly recognize him when they are each and all alike?"

Suddenly one of the bees flew to the old woman's face and began to sting her.

"Get away, you nasty thing, do!" she cried, beating it away from her.

"Well, don't you recognize your son?"

"No, I don't!"

"Very well, then you must come again on this day three years hence. The bee that stung you was your son. However, it is too late now, you must come again."

The old woman burst into tears, and left the place, promising to come again in three years.

When the time came round the old woman once more went to meet the sorcerer.

When he whistled this time, twelve white doves flew round the old woman.

"Try and recognize your son; he is among them," said the sorcerer.

She looked, and looked, but grew no wiser. All the twelve doves sat in a row; all had exactly the same feathers, and how was she to find him? She looked again, and saw one of the doves put its head under its wing; but although she noticed this, nothing crossed her mind.

"No," she said at last, "I do not recognize my son."

"The little dove that had its head under its wing

was your son. Now you must come again at the end of another three years, but that will be the last time; if you do not know him then he will be lost to you for ever."

"Old swindler!" muttered the old woman as the sorcerer and the doves disappeared.

The years passed away, and the old woman found herself for the last time at the place where she and the sorcerer first met. This time she determined to keep her eyes open.

The sorcerer whistled again, and twelve little ponies came galloping up and stood in two rows before the old woman.

"Now, then, little mother, which is your son?" asked the sorcerer.

The old woman passed up one row, then down the other, but no sign of any kind did she see. She passed by again, and this time one of the ponies began stamping on the ground.

"This is my son!" she said, stopping in front of the little pony.

"Right for once, little mother; you have recognized him this time!" cried the sorcerer. "But you are not so very clever, you know; if it had not been for your son's stamping in the way he did you would have passed him. However, you may take him home now, and may the Lord bless you both!"

The horse then changed itself into the old woman's son, who had grown wonderfully handsome in those few years.

"How did you get on without me, mother mine?" asked the young fellow, as they walked homewards.

"Very badly, my boy; I have hardly had anything to eat all the time."

"Well, mother, I shall see that you have plenty of everything now. Will a hundred roubles<sup>1</sup> be enough to start with?"

"A hundred roubles!" cried the old woman. "I never had so much in all my born days; in fact, I never saw so much. Where have you got them?"

"I have not got them yet, but I shall get them for you in a minute. Listen. Do you see those hunters galloping about yonder after a fox? Well, I shall change myself into a hound and catch the fox for them; they will then want to buy me, and ask you how much you want for me. 'A hundred roubles, gentlemen,' you must say. They will, of course, bargain with you, but you must not on any account give me for less. And another thing you must not forget; that is, to be sure and take my collar off before you part with me. The hunters are sure to make a fuss, but no matter; do as I tell you, and all will be right."

As soon as he had finished speaking he changed himself into a beautiful dog, and ran after the fox, which he very soon caught.

The old woman went up to the hunters, who had ridden up to the dog and were now stroking it, wondering whose it was.

"Why do you interrupt our hunting, old woman?" they asked, when they saw her coming up to them.

<sup>1</sup> 10*l.* English.

"Because, gentlemen, it is my dog, and I have come to fetch it away."

"No, old woman, don't take him away; we want to keep him ourselves."

"Very well, gentlemen, if you like to buy him you are welcome."

"How much do you want?"

"A hundred roubles, gentlemen."

"That is rather high, my good woman."

"No, gentlemen, not at all. Look at the dog yourselves; see what a splendid animal it is."

The hunters, after a little bargaining, counted out the money, while the old woman began taking the collar off; but when the hunters saw what she was doing, they would not hear of it.

"But I don't intend selling the collar," said the old woman; "I only sell the dog."

"Nonsense!" cried the hunters; "we must have the collar, too. Who ever thought of buying a dog without a collar? Why, the animal would be sure to get lost."

The old woman, after a great deal of arguing, at last consented, and giving them the dog as well as the collar, took the money, and went away.

Off rode the hunters, when suddenly a fox ran past. They unloosened their dogs and away they went; but the creature was not to be caught so easily.

"Let us try the new hound; he may be able to catch it," said one of the hunters.

They loosened him, too, but the cunning dog had hardly been set free when away he went in exactly

the opposite direction to the fox, and when at a safe distance from the hunters he changed himself quickly into his proper shape and overtook the old woman.

"Oh, mother! why on earth did you sell the collar? I warned you not, and if we had not met a fox I should have been lost to you for ever."

Then they began building a new hut for themselves, where they lived for some time without starving; but at last out of the hundred roubles only a hundred kopeks (2s. English) remained.

"My dear son," said the old woman, one day, "I wish we could get a little more money to buy a few things with."

"Very well; how much do you want? Will two hundred roubles be enough for you?"

"Two hundred roubles? why, we could build quite a large house, as well as buy all the things I want."

"Well, then, look here. I will change myself into a beautiful bird, and you must take me to market and sell me for two hundred roubles. But mind, mother, and on no account sell me in a cage, or else I can never come home again."

So saying he changed himself into a bird with such lovely feathers that the like had never been seen. The old woman was greatly astonished, and carried it to market in a pretty little cage, and in a very short time she had quite a crowd round her, who came to admire the beautiful creature, and wanted to buy it; but, unfortunately, the price was too high for them, so they shook their heads, whistled, and went away. The old woman was beginning to think that she would never get rid of it at all, when sud-

denly, who should turn up but the sorcerer. He knew her at once, and went up to her and began admiring the bird. The old woman did not recognize him, as he was got up to look like somebody else. He asked how much she wanted for the bird. She told him. He did not hesitate a moment, but gave her the money, and was just about to take the cage, when she stopped him.

"I did not sell the cage as well," said she.

After a long argument, the sorcerer and the old woman began quarrelling. But the assembled crowd took the old woman's part, and would not let the sorcerer have the cage, but gave it back to her. The sorcerer, on seeing that he could not do anything, took the bird, and tied it up in his handkerchief and went home.

"Well, daughter," said he, "I have brought back our young man after all, and a nice lot of trouble he gave me."

"Oh! where is he?" she exclaimed.

He untied the handkerchief very carefully; but just as he had opened it, out flew the bird through the open window, and away high up into the air, quite out of sight, leaving the sorcerer stamping about in an awful rage, and his pretty little daughter to lament her loss.

When the old woman returned home from market, she was greatly surprised, as well as overjoyed, at seeing her son seated very comfortably in a chair, waiting for her.

"Thank Heaven," said he, embracing her, "that you did what I told you this time. It would have



been awfully unpleasant, for me as well as for you, had you done otherwise, for the man who bought me was no other than the sorcerer. He is trying to get me back to marry his daughter, who seems to have taken a great fancy to me ; but as I don't particularly care for the young lady myself, I am by no means anxious to return to him."

Things went on very well for some time. The old woman got all she wanted, and everything was very comfortable in the little hut, till one day she looked out of the window into the little yard at the back, and sighed.

"What is the matter now, mother mine?" asked the son. "Is there anything more that you are in need of?"

"Oh, it's not worth talking about, dear! I was only thinking what a pity it is that such a nice piece of ground as we have at the back here should be so empty. Now, if I had the means, I should buy some horses, cows, pigs, poultry, or something to make it look cheerful ; but it's no use my wishing for things when we can't afford to have them."

"I don't know, mother ; I think we shall soon be able to get all you want. I told you that I would try and please you in every possible way, and get you everything you like ; so take me to the market again, and I shall change myself into a lovely little pony, and you must try and sell me for three hundred roubles ; but be careful not to sell me with the bridle."

So off went the old woman once more to market, leading a sweetly pretty, plump little pony. The crowd again surrounded her, admiring the wicked-

looking little horse, and began bargaining ; but the old woman firmly kept to her price. "Three hundred roubles, and not a kopek less," she had said, and stuck to it.

"How much did you say, little mother?" asked a voice.

It was the sorcerer again.

"Three hundred roubles, and not a kopek less."

"There you are, three hundred roubles, well counted," he cried, throwing the money down before her, while the old woman began taking off the bridle.

"No, no, old woman!" the sorcerer exclaimed, taking the bridle roughly out of her hands. "What next? Where in the wide world did you see a horse sold without a bridle? How do you expect me to take him home?"

And before any one could stop him, he jumped on to the little pony, and galloped off as hard as he could, leaving the old woman wringing her hands, bemoaning her hard fate.

"Oh, my son, my son, my darling son! I have lost you now for ever!"

The people tried to comfort her as best they could, though they themselves were sorely puzzled by her cries of "My son!" and wondered how a pony could be so nearly related to her; but they at last came to the conclusion that the "poor old woman was not quite right in her upper storey," and told her that she had best go home and console herself with a glass or two of *vodka*, which she could well afford out of the three hundred roubles. But the old woman had recognized the sorcerer as he mounted the pony, and

regarded the money he had given her with disgust. What was it to her, if she was never to see her beloved son again?

Meanwhile the sorcerer, thinking that he would pay the "youngster" out for flying out at the window when last he bought him as a bird, rode him about for three whole days and three whole nights without giving the tired horse a moment's rest. He rode over stock and stone, up hill and down dale, until the perspiration poured down his face in streams. He was at length obliged to go home. When he arrived in his garden, he tied the unfortunate animal's head to a tree in such an uncomfortable position that the poor creature could hardly breathe.

"Well," said the sorcerer aloud to himself as he walked into the hut, "I think I have pretty well done for him this time."

"Done for whom, father?" asked his daughter.

"Why, for that young fellow I used to have, whom you took such a fancy to. There he is. Just look at him. Not likely to get away this time, is he?"

The damsel at once ran off into the garden, and on seeing the poor little pony tied up with his head high up in the air, she could not help being sorry for him, and angry with her father for his cruelty.

"Poor thing," she cried, "how my father has tormented you! How cruel of him to have tied you up like this, and without any food, too!"

She untied the horse's head very gently from the tree, and patted him fondly. But the horse loosened himself from her grasp, and, after thanking her, he bounded off into the fields and far away.

The girl was so alarmed that she ran trembling to her father, exclaiming,—

“Forgive me, father, but I loosened the little pony, as I felt so sorry for him, and he has run away.”

Hardly had the sorcerer heard these words when he changed himself into a grey wolf, and gave chase. The pony, on hearing some one chasing him, turned himself into a white dove. The sorcerer then changed himself into a kite, and flew after the dove. They were very close to each other now; but the dove suddenly perceiving a river below him, flew down, changing himself into a stickleback, and stood on the defensive. The sorcerer, not wishing to be beaten, changed himself into a pike, and dashed into the water. The stickleback shot rapidly through a hole in the shell of a crawfish, and waited.

“Turn your head round, friend stickleback,” said the pike, “and I will eat you.”

“You had better not, friend pike, it would not agree with you; you would very soon suffocate. And besides, pikes never eat sticklebacks; it is not at all fashionable.”

And then they stood looking at each other for nearly three hours, till at last the pike fell fast asleep. Meanwhile the stickleback slipped out of the shell and swam through the water. He swam and swam till he came to a raft. He climbed on to it, and floated on until he came near to the shore, where, to his surprise, he saw a most beautiful princess sitting watching the tide. The stickleback changed himself at once into a golden ring, and rolled before the princess's feet. She took it up, put it on her

beautiful little white finger, and gazed at it in admiration as she said softly, in a low, musical voice,—

“Ah, how I should like to find a good and handsome young man to marry me! I don't care for any of the men I have seen, they are none of them to my taste; but I suppose I am difficult to please, and shall have to die an old maid!”

At this moment the pike, who had been left sleeping, appeared on the scene, and, on hearing these words, changed himself at once into a handsome young man, and came up to the princess, saying,—

“I beg your pardon, Princess, I lost my ring just now, and I think you picked it up. Will you please give it back to me; or keep it, and take me for your husband, if you think I am good-looking enough for you.”

The princess was very angry at the cool way in which the stranger spoke.

“Marry *you*, you impudent creature!” she cried. “There, take your ring, and be gone!”

So saying, she took the ring from her finger, and threw it down on the ground before the sorcerer; but the moment the ring fell it turned into a number of very small seeds, one of which rolled under the princess's shoe. On seeing this, the sorcerer changed himself quickly into a cock, and began picking the seeds. When he had finished eating them all up, he cried out in a loud voice,—

“Cock-a-doodle-doo! I have done the very thing I wanted!”

But at that moment the last seed rolled out from under the shoe, and, changing itself into a handsome

hawk, threw itself on to the cock, and sent its sharp claws into his breast.

“Cock-a-doodle-doo, brother,” cried the cock. “Let me go! let me go!”

“Not I,” replied the hawk. “Did you ever know a hawk to be such a fool as all that?”

And the unfortunate cock was torn in two. After that the hawk changed himself into a young man, so handsome that it would be simply impossible to describe him, or even to imagine his equal!

The princess fell so much in love with him that in a very few days they were married. Of course the old woman came to the wedding, and everybody was happy all round, especially the old woman.

“I never thought—I never dreamt—that he would ever marry a princess!” she cried in her joy. “Now I shall be able to spend the rest of my days in peace and happiness. This is what has come out of the apprenticeship that every one laughed at.”

Her son did not keep up the arts which the sorcerer had taught him, but very soon forgot them all, as he had not much chance to practise now.

Many years after some other people went in search of the same kind of apprenticeship for their sons; but all in vain, for the last sorcerer had been killed, and with him died the wonderful trade.

## THE SNOW-MAIDEN.

MANY years ago, in a distant Russian village, there lived a peasant, by name Akem, with his wife Masha ; they lived in a small wooden hut, where they spent their days in love and harmony ; but children had they none. This was a very sore point with both of them, they used to sit by the window or at the door of their little hut looking at their neighbours' children playing about, and wished that they had some of their own ; but finding that it was no use wishing, they at last became sad in their old age.

One cold winter's day, when the snow lay thick upon the uneven country roads, and the little village boys were running about throwing snowballs to keep themselves warm, and making snow-men and women, old Akem and Masha sat by their window looking at them in silence. Suddenly Akem looked up at his wife, and said, laughing,—

“Masha, what do you say to coming out into the road and making ourselves a snow-man or woman, like those little boys yonder ?”

Masha laughed, too, it seemed such a queer thing to do at their time of life !

“Yes, if you like,” she replied ; “let us go, it may cheer us up a bit ; but I don't see why we should make a snow-man or woman, let us rather make a

child out of snow, as Providence does not seem to wish us to have a real one !”

“I do believe you are getting quite clever in your old age, Masha ! Come along, then, and let us set to work.”

Off went the old couple, laughing at themselves all the while, and sure enough they commenced making a snow-child ! They made the legs, arms, hands, feet, and a snowball for the head.

“What, in the name of wonder, are you up to ?” exclaimed a passer-by, stopping suddenly in front of the two old people.

“A snow-child !” laughed Masha, as she began to explain everything to the stranger.

“May the Saints help you !” said he, as he went his way.

When they had got the legs, arms, hands, feet, and head fixed up together, Akem began making the nose, two holes for the eyes, and was just drawing a small line for the mouth, when he suddenly, much to his surprise, felt warm breath come out of it. He took his hand away quickly, and on looking up at the two holes made for the eyes, beheld two real, beautiful blue eyes ; the lips became full and rosy, and as for the nose, it was the dearest little nose ever seen.

“Good heavens ! what does this mean ? is it a temptation of the Evil One ?” cried Akem, crossing himself several times, while the snow-child threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him as though she were alive.

“O Akem ! Akem !” cried Masha, trembling with



joy, "Providence has at last taken pity on us, and sent us this child to cheer us in our old age."

She was about to throw her arms around the snow-child and embrace it, when, to the astonishment of both the old man and woman, the snow fell off, and left in Masha's arms a beautiful little girl.

"Oh, my little Snow-Maiden! my little darling!" cried the happy Masha, as she led the lovely child into their hut. Meanwhile, Akem could not get over his wonder. He rubbed his head, and felt sorely puzzled; he did not know whether he was asleep or awake, but felt almost sure that something had gone wrong with him somewhere.

But to return to the Snow-Maiden (as Masha was pleased to call her). She grew very rapidly—not only daily but hourly—into a tall, beautiful, and graceful girl; the peasants were delighted with her—Akem had come to the conclusion that it was all right—their hut was now always in constant mirth. The village girls and boys were frequent visitors to it; they played, read, and sang with the Snow-Maiden, who understood it all thoroughly, and did her best to amuse all around her. She talked, laughed, and was altogether so cheerful and good-natured, that everybody loved her dearly, and tried to please her in every possible way,—at the same time a better and more obedient daughter never was. She had the most lovely white skin, just like snow; her eyes were like forget-me-nots, her lips and cheeks like roses; in fact, she was the very picture of health and beauty; with her lovely golden hair hanging down her back,

she looked just like a girl of seventeen, though she was only a few days old.

"Akem," said Masha, one day to her husband, "how good Providence has been to us; how Snow-Maiden has brightened us, in these few days, and how wicked we were to grumble as we did."

"Yes, Masha," returned Akem, "we ought to thank Providence for all that He has done for us, and thank Him that we have mirth instead of gloom, in our little home."

Winter passed, the heavens rejoiced, the spring sun came out, the swallows began to fly about, and the grass and trees became green once more.

The lovely Russian peasant-girls gathered themselves together, and met their young cavaliers under the trees in the forest, where they danced and sang their pretty Russian songs. But the Snow-Maiden was dull.

"What is the matter with you, my darling?" asked Masha; "are you ill? You are always so bright and cheerful as a rule, and now you are so dull all at once. Has any bad man thrown a spell over you?"

"No, mother mine; nothing is the matter with me, darling," the Snow-Maiden replied, but still she continued to be dull, and by degrees she lost her beautiful colour, and began to droop sadly, greatly to the alarm of those around her.

The last snow had now vanished, the gardens began to bloom, the rivers and lakes rippled, the birds sang merrily; in fact all the wide world seemed happy; yet our little Snow-Maiden drooped and looked sad.

She sat with her hands folded in the coolest part of the hut. *She* loved the cold winter, it was her best friend, but this horrid heat she hated. She was glad when it rained a little, there was no broiling sun then. She did not mind the winter sun, but the summer sun was her enemy; and quite natural, too, poor thing, when she was born in the winter in the snow! At last the great summer feast arrived, the village youths and maidens came to the Snow-Maiden and asked her to join them in a romp through the woods, and begged Masha to let her go with them. At first Masha refused, but the girls begged so hard that at last, on thinking it over, she consented, for she thought it might cheer Snow-Maiden up.

“But,” said she, “take care of her, for she is the apple of my eye, and if anything happens to her, I don’t know what I shall do!”

“All right! all right! we shall take care of her, she is just as dear to us!” cried the young people, as they took Snow-Maiden and ran off with her into the forest, where the girls wove themselves wreaths, while the young men gathered sticks, which they piled up high; and at sunset they set fire to them, and then they arranged themselves all in a row one after another, boys and girls, and prepared to jump over the burning heap. Our Snow-Maiden was the last in the row.

“Mind,” said the girls to her, “don’t stay behind but jump after us.”

One! two! three! and away they went, jumping over the flames in great delight. Suddenly they heard

a piercing scream, and on looking round discovered that Snow-Maiden was missing.

“Ah,” cried they, laughing, “she is up to one of her tricks again, and has most likely gone and hidden herself somewhere. Come, let us go and search for her.”

They all ran off in pairs in different directions, but nowhere could they find their missing companion. Their happy young faces soon turned very grave, and their joy gave place to sorrow and alarm. They met at last in the road outside the forest, and began asking each other what they had best do.

“Perhaps she has run home,” said one.

This seemed a happy thought ; so they ran to the hut, but no Snow-Maiden was there. They looked for her all through the next day and night, and on the third, and fourth. They sought her in the village, hut after hut, and in the forest, tree after tree, bush after bush ; but all in vain, nowhere could they find her. As for poor Akem and Masha, it is needless to say, that their grief was too great for words, no one could comfort them. Day after day, night after night, did poor Masha wander into the forest, calling like the cuckoo,—

“Oh, my little Snow-Maiden ! Oh, my little darling.”

But there was no answer to her call, not one word from that sweet voice did Masha get in reply. Snow-Maiden was not to be found, that was certain, but how had she vanished, and whither had she gone ? Had the wild beasts of the forest eaten her up ? or had the robber-bird carried her off to the blue sea ?

No, it was not the wild beasts, nor was it the robber-bird, but—as our little friend was jumping over the flames after her companions she evaporated into a thin cloud, and flew to the heights of the heavens.

## JACK FROST.

ONCE upon a time there lived an old Russian peasant with his wife and three daughters—Martha, Pasha, and Masha. Now the eldest, Martha, happened to be a step-daughter, therefore she was, of course, greatly disliked by her step-mother. Early in the morning, till late at night, the step-mother would do nothing but chide the unfortunate Martha, and give her more work than was good for her. She had to go out and get the wood to heat the stoves, wash the floors, feed the cocks and hens, milk the cows, and do a number of other things. Yet the step-mother was not satisfied, and would keep on telling her that she was a lazy, good-for-nothing girl, and that she never by any chance put the hut in proper order, nor put the potatoes in the right dish, and various other little domestic trifles, which do not belong to our story. Martha was, so to speak, always in hot water; still, she wisely held her tongue, trying hard all the time to please her step-mother, who, unfortunately, was the sort of woman that nothing *would* please. As for the other two girls, they naturally took after their mother, and snubbed Martha right and left, so that the poor

girl was scolded by all, except her father, who loved her dearly.

Years went by, and these young girls grew into beautiful young women, and were beginning to think of getting married. The father, though anxious to find them all good partners, was sorely afraid to part with Martha, who had become a wonderfully beautiful girl ; the step-mother, on the other hand, was anxious to get rid of her. She was not particular in what way ; but she knew that Martha was the chief attraction in the house, and that while she was there, the other two girls were not likely to stand any chance. Many a young man had already asked for her hand, but Martha was in no hurry, as she cared for none of them very much ; so she refused them all ; but no one had yet proposed to the other two girls. The step-mother began thinking what she had better do to get Martha out of the way. At last she thought of something that seemed to her a very good idea.

“Martha must really make up her mind to marry some one,” said she one night to her husband.

“But she does not care for any one ; besides, what should *we* do if she did ? who would feed the animals and look after the hut, if Martha were to marry ?”

“Stuff ! you surely don’t want her to stop at home altogether, and die an old maid ?”

“Certainly not ; yet who is to look after everything, and cheer us in our old age. I am sure neither Pasha nor Masha would care about that.”

“Of course not ; they will soon be snatched up. In fact, they would have been married *now*, only the

dear, good girls thought that Martha being the *eldest* ought to marry first."

The old man hesitated.

"Well, yes, wife," he said at last. "My Martha ought certainly to marry, but the question is to *whom*; she cares for no one."

The woman laughed to herself.

"I know of a suitable husband," she said.

"Indeed, and who is he?" asked her husband astonished.

"Why, Jack Frost. He is rich, he is handsome, what more could she want? Look at all the fir and pine-trees, look at the ice and the snow,—they all belong to him, every one of them. I hear that he is looking about for a wife, and if he takes a fancy to Martha, which he is sure to do, no one could help it,—how rich she would be!"

The old peasant opened his eyes and mouth very wide, and stood staring at his wife in great surprise. However, thinking that she knew best, he at last asked her,—

"But where is this Jack Frost you speak of to be found?"

"In the forest, of course, you silly!"

"Yes, but that's rather a large order."

"Well, look here! Early to-morrow morning you must harness the horses to the sledge, take a large empty box, and drive into the forest with Martha—drive on until you come to a very dark pine thicket. In front of you, you will see an ice-hill, upon which stands a large fir-tree; put the box under this tree, and leave Martha with it; but don't tell her the reason'



or anything about it ; only just say that you will come back and fetch her in a few minutes ; and that she must wait patiently till your return ;—and all is sure to turn out well, just as I wish it.”

“ But she will die of the cold.”

“ No, not she ; Jack Frost will look after her.”

But the woman’s idea was that Martha should sit on that box until she died of the bitter cold which surrounded the ice-hill, near which Jack Frost resided.

Next morning the old man did as his wife had ordered him ; he harnessed his horses, and drove off with his daughter to the ice-hill, where he left her to sit on the box under the big fir-tree, telling her that he would come back soon and fetch her away.

Poor Martha sat there for a long time, trembling with the cold. Not knowing why she had to stop there ; but only that her father had told her to wait for him and not to move, she meant to obey him come what might. She felt dreadfully miserable, as she saw that the day was drawing to a close, and yet her father did not come. Had he forgotten his promise ? or had something happened to him ? She tried to cry, but no tears came. Suddenly she heard a slight noise close to her ear : it was Jack Frost jumping from tree to tree. When he saw her he came nearer to where she sat.

“ Are you warm, pretty maiden ? are you warm ? ” he asked, in a cold, clear voice, from the top of the fir-tree.

“ I hardly know,” she said with a shudder, as she tried to look up, but had not the strength to do so.

Jack Frost jumped from branch to branch, coming nearer to her. Suddenly he sprang from the tree and stood by her side, his ice-cold fingers touching her shoulders. He was a handsome-looking old man, with a long white beard, and curly white locks hanging down his back; he had a kind-looking old face, with a good-natured smile on it.

"Are you warm, pretty maiden?" he asked again, stooping down to look into her face.

"Yes," she replied, "I am burning."

Martha was really freezing, but the cold was so great that she thought she was broiling.

Jack Frost felt very sorry for the poor girl, and coming closer to her, covered her up with what seemed to her fur cloaks and rugs, but she knew no more until she found herself at home again, surrounded by her father, step-mother, and sisters; she was clad in a beautiful silk dress, with a lovely fur mantle, and the box which was taken to the forest empty was now full of beautiful presents. It was really funny to see how cross the step-mother became on seeing Martha actually back again with such a number of rich presents and things round her; she tried, however, to keep her rage down, as well as she could. She never thought for a moment that her step-daughter's trip to the forest would have ended in this way. Nevertheless, she took the old man aside, and said proudly,—

"Was I not right in making you take Martha to the forest? See how rich she has become; Jack Frost has evidently taken a great fancy to her. I always said he would, and if you had not been in such

a hurry to go and fetch her back he would have married her by this time, and she would have been richer still ; but it is no good talking about it now."

Her thoughts were very different from her speech.

"No, my dear," she thought to herself ; "I am not going to be beaten by *you*."

A few days later the woman ordered her unfortunate husband to harness his horses and take her own two daughters, Pasha and Masha, into the wood to try their luck, and see what Jack Frost would give *them*. Away went the old man, with Pasha and Masha, to the pine forest, and told them to sit on the box under the fir-tree, just as Martha had done. He then left them and went home.

At first the girls enjoyed it very much, and talked and laughed together.

"It does seem such a queer idea," said Pasha, "to send us *here* to find a lot of dresses and things, just as though we could not buy everything we want in the village, or wait till we go to Moscow."

"We should have to wait long in that case, Pasha, as we are not likely to go there in a hurry."

"Mamma said that we should see some very handsome young men here, if we waited long enough. I wonder whether that is true ?"

"I don't know ! All I know is that it's getting frightfully cold ;" and Masha shivered as she drew her warm furs round her.

But Pasha did not mind the cold ; she did not feel it half as much as her sister, for she was blessed with

the gift of the gab, and chatted away right merrily, laughing and talking about every possible thing.

“What did you say, Pasha?” Masha would ask almost every minute. “I am so cold I can hardly hear what you are talking about. I wonder whether those young men really will come.”

“Have patience, my dear; men *always* keep one waiting; they can't be punctual to save their lives.”

“I don't believe they *will* come, say what you like; but supposing only one man comes, which of us do you think he will choose—you or me?”

“*Maybe* he will take *you*,” snarled Pasha.

“No, he will *most* likely choose *you*, my dear!” retorted Masha.

With that they began to sneer at each other, till they heard Jack Frost jumping from tree to tree, shaking them as though they were so many bells. Now it so happened that the girls did not know that it was Jack Frost who had given Martha all those presents, and that it was for him they were waiting.

“There, Masha!” cried Pasha, “I hear something. I believe the young men are coming at last in their troikas;<sup>1</sup> don't you hear the bells?”

Jack Frost came near them.

“Are you warm, pretty maidens?” he asked; “are you warm, my dears?”

“*Warm*, you old stupid!” cried Pasha, looking up at him; “warm, indeed! oh, yes, of course we are; it's a wonder we are not dead with the heat.”

“What are you waiting for?” he asked.

<sup>1</sup> A carriage with three horses harnessed abreast.

“What business is that of yours?”

Jack Frost smiled.

“We are waiting for our lovers,” said Masha, who thought her sister had been rather rude. “But I suppose they have lost their way in this horrid, dark forest.”

“Queer place to wait for lovers,” Jack Frost said. “I hardly think they would be such asses as to come here. Are you still warm, pretty maidens?”

“Get away with you, you old stupid, do! Can’t you see that we are nearly frozen to death,” cried Pasha angrily.

Still Jack Frost kept on coming closer and closer to them, and at last he leaped from the fir-tree, touched them with his ice-cold hands, which froze them to death, for Jack Frost had somehow taken a dislike to the girls, and thus Pasha and Masha departed this world of sorrow.

In the morning the woman sent her husband to go and fetch them home again, with all the treasures that she thought they would be sure to have. Away went the old man to the pine forest, where, to his horror, he found the dead bodies of his two daughters lying on the ice-hill. He took them up, kissed their pale, cold faces, put them in his sledge, and drove home to his wife, who came out smiling to meet him; but alas for those smiles! they died away, as Pasha and Masha had done.

“Where are my children?” she cried out.

The old man, after uncovering the rugs, displayed the bodies of the two unfortunate girls lying dead in

the cart. Angry words did not remain long unuttered by the mother's lips.

"What have you done to them, you wicked, wicked man? My poor little darlings, they were the delight of my life. My Pasha, my Masha, what shall I do without them? my darling little doves. What did you do to them, you horrid old wretch? Tell me this instant."

"Leave off talking that nonsense, this is no time for scolding. You told me to take the girls to the forest; you thought of nothing but riches all the time, and this is what you get for it. You can't find fault with me, I did what you told me to do, and these are the thanks I get."

The woman after a little more scolding and howling came to herself again, and actually forgave her husband, who had done nothing. After that they lived happily for many a long year, not forgetting, however, to bury Pasha and Masha. As for Martha, she soon married a rich and handsome young man, and lived happily ever after, as people always do in Fairy Tales.

## IVAN AND THE CHESTNUT HORSE.

ONCE upon a time there lived an old peasant, who had three sons. Two of these were supposed to be very clever, while the third, the youngest of the three, was said to be so dreadfully stupid that people nicknamed him Ivan the Stupid, or just simply the Stupid ; while others, less polite, and not so choice in their language, called him the "Fool." Whether it was to keep up his reputation among his friends or not, I cannot say, but Ivan would spend all his time when at home lying on the stove doing nothing.

A very great feast was to be held at the king's palace, and was to last for three days ; to this feast everybody was invited, the rich and poor, great and small ; and among them were Ivan's brothers.

When the first great day arrived, the two brothers began putting on their Sunday's best, and making themselves generally *smart*.

"I wish you would take me with you," said Ivan from the stove, as he looked at his brothers dressing.

"Take *you* with us!" they cried. "What next? Do you wish to frighten the people? Where can you go to? You are only fit to lie on that stove and growl!"

Ivan sighed, and when his brothers had gone he went out into the fields and wept bitterly, for he longed to be at the feast. Suddenly, to his surprise, he saw a beautiful chestnut horse galloping towards him ; and the earth beneath the creature trembled. From his ears came fire, and from his nostrils issued forth smoke.

“Do not grieve, Ivan,” said the horse in a voice that sounded like thunder. “I know what it is you want, and shall try to help you ; but first get in at my right ear, and then out at my left.”

Ivan obeyed, wondering all the time what it all meant, it was such an extraordinary animal this horse. When Ivan climbed out of the horse’s left ear, he found himself dressed in such beautiful clothes that he hardly knew himself again ; had he only seen his face he would have been still more astonished : he looked so clean and so handsome. After this the horse ordered him to get on his back, and away they rode over stock and stone, up hill and down dale, till at last they reached the palace, where at one of the windows sat the king’s daughter, as beautiful as the day, and on her finger was a diamond ring, which shone like fire in the sunshine. It so happened that a wicked fairy, who had had a spite against the princess, came to the palace one day, and cast a spell upon this beautiful girl, in consequence of which she could never marry until some handsome youth should be able to leap from the ground to the high window, or rather balcony, on which she sat night and day without moving, and take from her finger the diamond ring. But somehow no one



seemed to see the use of jumping so high and breaking their necks, though they would not have minded having the princess. So when Ivan arrived he put spurs to his horse and tried to jump to where the beautiful creature sat, and had he only leapt an inch or two higher he would certainly have reached her. All the people stared in amazement, and applauded the daring young stranger. As Ivan turned his horse homewards he saw his brothers standing near the entrance looking at him, but of course they did not recognize him. How could they? As he galloped past he touched them lightly on their shoulders with his whip and rode home. When he arrived in the field where he had met this wonderful horse, he got into the animal's left ear and came out at the right, and was once more Ivan the Stupid, dirty and in rags. He asked the creature how he might be able to find him, if he should want him again.

"I am determined to get the ring off the princess's finger," he said to the horse; "and marry her afterwards. But of course I can do nothing without you."

"Well," replied the horse, "I am willing to help you, Ivan; and I think we shall succeed in getting that ring, if not to-morrow, on the following day. When you require me again, all you have to do is to come into this field and cry out in a loud voice, 'Chestnut horse, chestnut horse, stand before me like a leaf before a tree;' then will I appear."

Ivan thanked him, and went home with a basketful of poisonous mushrooms, which he gathered on

his way, and brought them to his mother, who laughed at him.

"Look at the mushrooms you have brought," she said; "they are fit for nobody but *you*, you stupid!"

Ivan laughed also, and climbed into his old resting-place, the top of the big stove, where he waited for the return of his brothers. When they at last arrived they were full of news, and told their parents all that they had heard and seen,—how a handsome young prince had been there, and how he had touched them with his whip, and a good deal more; while Ivan laughed himself to sleep.

Next day the two elder brothers again went to the feast, but Ivan went into the fields and called out just as the horse had told him,—

"Chestnut horse! chestnut horse! stand before me like a leaf before a tree!"

And immediately there was a great sound like approaching thunder, and the horse galloped up to him. Ivan did exactly as he had done the day before, climbed into the right ear and out of the left, jumped on to the animal's back, looking just as handsome as on the first occasion, and rode off to the palace, where everybody made way for him, and welcomed him with the shouts of "Hoorah!" But he looked at no one, and riding straight to where the princess sat, tried to jump up to the window, but no; he did not get any farther than the last time, so he turned his horse round in disgust, touched his brothers lightly on the shoulders as before, and rode away.

When the brothers returned that night Ivan was

lying on the stove as usual. They told their parents all the news, and said that the handsome young prince was there, and that he had evidently taken a great fancy to them, as he had again touched them with his whip. Ivan chuckled, but said not a word.

On the third day the brothers set off as before to the king's palace, while Ivan went to meet the chestnut horse. He looked far handsomer than ever as he sat his steed proudly, and rode off to the palace, determined to be successful this time, come what might, and putting spurs to the horse he jumped to the balcony, and actually seized the ring from the princess's finger, and even kissed the beautiful face!

Another shout of applause arose from the crowd, who had been watching him eagerly. Away rode Ivan with the ring on his finger, touching his brothers again as he passed. But when the assembled crowd saw him depart, they tried to stop him, crying, "Hold him! hold him! stop him! stop him!" But in vain. Ivan was too quick for them, thanks to the chestnut horse.

Before he returned home he wrapped a piece of rag round the finger on which the ring was.

"What is the matter with your finger?" asked his mother, when he came home.

"Oh, I went out to get you some more mushrooms, and hurt my finger. That's all."

His parents laughed, and told him that he was the greatest donkey they had ever come across; but he did not mind them. He crept up on to the stove, and waited for his brothers, who had more than usual to tell this time. At last Ivan, wishing very much to

look at the ring, untied the rag round his finger. Hardly had he done this, when the ring sent forth such a brilliant lustre that it lighted up the hut as if by lightning, greatly to Ivan's alarm ; the parents and brothers not seeing the ring, only the sudden light, thought Ivan was playing with matches.

"Leave off, you donkey," said one of the brothers, "or you are sure to set the place on fire! It is high time for such as you to be asleep!"

Three or four days after this the king commanded all the people in his kingdom to come to a grand feast in the palace. Not a soul should stay away, and if by chance any persons dared to disobey his orders, they were to be executed at once! The reason of this sudden invitation to every one all round was that the king wanted to find the youth who had taken the ring from the princess's finger. He had already searched everywhere where he thought it likely to find the young man, but all in vain ; so he determined to give a grand feast, and invite every one to it. In that way he felt sure that the person he was in want of would be found. He also intended to reward this stranger, and give him the princess for his wife.

Of course the peasant and his family had to go to this feast whether they liked it or not, and were obliged to take Ivan with them. When all the people were seated at the various tables, eating and drinking to their hearts' content, the beautiful princess arose and began serving round the mead with her own fair hands. Suddenly she came upon Ivan, who was sitting with his finger tied up. He had his best clothes on, but these were not much to boast of. He had intended

going to call his horse, and asking him to help him and dress him up before he went to the feast ; but there had been no time for that, so he was obliged to appear in an ordinary dress. Yet he looked wonderfully handsome all the same.

“Why is your finger tied up ?” asked the princess, stopping before him. “Have you hurt it ? Untie it ; perhaps I may be able to cure it for you ?”

After a great deal of hesitation he obeyed, and behold the diamond ring glittered on his finger. The whole palace was illuminated as if by magic.

The princess looked at him, and then taking him by the hand led him to the king, her father, and greatly to the astonishment of all present said,—

“Behold my bridegroom !”

Ivan was then made to tell his story, and how it was that he managed to reach the balcony and get the ring, when no one else could do so. After he had explained all, the king ordered him to be taken and dressed in rich and princely garments, and he was once more the handsome stranger who had stolen the ring. What a change, what a difference between his usual get-up and his present costume ! Everybody stared at him in astonishment. He walked, and talked, and looked so noble, that no one would have believed that he was the same person whom people called Ivan the Stupid ! In fact, all present were charmed with him.

As for his parents and brothers, they could not make out what it was all about, and wondered whether they were dreaming.

The marriage took place in a very short time. It

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was a wonderfully grand affair, and all the grandest people in the kingdom were invited to it.

Their wine was rare,  
I drank it there ;  
With no slight sips,  
I moistened my lips.

And from that day forth no one ever dreamt of calling that noble-looking young prince, *Ivan the Stupid!*

THE THREE KOPEKS.<sup>1</sup>

A PEASANT called one day on a very rich merchant and wanted to be engaged as a workman. The merchant agreed, for he liked the man, and was in need of a steady-going workman.

After working a whole year the peasant demanded his wages. The merchant gave him the wages he usually gave, but the peasant returned the money, only keeping one *kopek*. With this he went to the river-side, and, throwing it into the water, said to himself,—

“If I have worked well and honestly the *kopek* will float, but if I have not worked properly it will sink!”

But the *kopek* sank, and he returned to the merchant, and asked to be re-engaged, to which the merchant was only too glad to consent.

When another year was over he again asked for his wages, and received what was due to him; but greatly to the merchant's surprise, he again only took one *kopek*, and, going to the river-side, threw it into the water, saying, as before,—

“If I have worked properly the *kopek* will float on the surface, but if I have not worked properly it will sink!”

<sup>1</sup> About three farthings.

Again the kopek sank, and again he went to the merchant, and asked to be taken back for the third time. He worked hard for a whole year, and then asked for his money. This time the merchant offered him more than his usual pay, but still the man refused it, and only took one kopek, which he threw into the river, as before, when, to his great surprise, he saw all the three kopeks floating on the water. He took them out, and went on farther. On the road he met a merchant going to church, with some candles in his hands. He went up to him, and asked him for a candle, giving him a kopek for it. The merchant sold it him, and went to church, when he somehow let the kopek which the peasant had given him drop on the ground, and from it came flames of fire. The people were greatly alarmed, and asked who it was that had let it fall.

“I did,” said the merchant; “a workman bought a candle of me, and paid me with that kopek.”

The people were very much astonished, and went and lit their candles at the wonderful coin.

Meanwhile the workman continued his way, and soon met another merchant who was going to market; he stopped him, and, giving him a kopek, asked him to get him something for it in the market. The merchant laughed; but, nevertheless, took the kopek, and went to the market, and, after buying some things for himself, he recollected the kopek, and laughed again.

“What on earth am I to get with it?” he thought.

At that moment a boy came running up with a lovely white cat, and begged him to buy it.



"How much do you want for it?" asked the merchant.

"Only one kopek, sir," replied the boy, "though it is worth three ships."

The merchant bought the cat and pursued his journey, when he was suddenly stopped by some sailors, who asked him to go on board their ship with his cat, as a very big rat had got in somehow, and no one could get rid of the creature, for no dogs or cats could catch the horrid thing; but they thought that perhaps his cat would be able to succeed. The merchant agreed to this proposal, and went on board with his cat, which soon began hunting and smelling for the rat, and, after some difficulty, she caught and killed it.

When the king heard of this wonderful cat he called the merchant and offered to buy it, but at first the merchant would not sell it, saying that it did not belong to him, but that he had bought it of a little boy in the market to give to a peasant. The king, however, said that he would give him anything he liked in exchange. At last the merchant said that it was worth three ships, and if the king would give him these, he would consent to part with the cat.

The king agreed to this, and the merchant set out on his way home, when he met the workman, who stopped and asked him what he had bought with the kopek. The merchant told him the whole story, and gave him the ships, which were anchored not very far off.

The peasant was greatly amused, and asked the merchant to accept two of them for his trouble, while

he himself sailed away in the other. He sailed and sailed till he came to another kingdom, on the shores of which were some splendid oak-trees; here he thought he would spend the night; so he anchored and climbed up into one of the oak-trees, and fell asleep. Suddenly he was awakened by some one talking beneath. He sat up to listen, and heard Erachta, who was a well-known robber and murderer, whom no one had been able to catch, boasting to his comrades that on the following night he intended to steal the king's beautiful daughter. His comrades, in reply, told him that if he failed to do so they would flog him with iron rods!

As soon as the peasant heard this he got down, unseen, and went to the king, told him what he had heard Erachta say, and also asked to be allowed to be in the palace and save the princess. The king thanked him, and consented, telling him that he would reward him handsomely if he succeeded in saving her.

When night came on the peasant took out his last kopek, threw it on the ground, and out came flames of fire; so that when Erachta arrived to carry off the princess he could not do so, on account of the magic power of the coin. He went back to his comrades, who kept their promise, and nearly flogged him to death with their iron rods, and then threw him into a dark cave.

Meanwhile the peasant became a great man, married the king's daughter, whose life he had saved, and lived happily for many a long year.

### THE RED FLAMINGOES.

THERE lived, once upon a time, a Russian peasant, with his wife and two children, a little girl and a wee little boy.

One day the peasant and his wife were getting ready to go to market, so they said to the little girl, who was to stop at home,—

“We are going up to town to market, and will buy you a pretty little handkerchief and a cake but you must promise to be a good girl while we are away; take care of your little brother, and don't go out into the road, but remain in the garden and play.”

So saying, they left the hut and went off to market. The little girl took her little brother, and, after putting him on the grass under the window, left him to play with some kittens, while she went to look out of the garden gate at the village children, who were playing about in the road. After having watched them for some time, she thought it would be rather jolly to go and join them in their game. Away she ran, quite forgetting what her parents had said. While she was playing with her companions she noticed some red flamingoes fly into the garden. Now, these creatures had the reputation of stealing very small children, so

when our little friend saw them she left her game and ran back to the garden to look after her little brother, when what was her grief to find him missing. She searched and searched all over the place, but in vain; he was nowhere to be found!

“Perhaps those horrid red flamingoes have stolen him!” she thought.

So she ran out into the fields as fast as ever her legs could carry her, in hopes of overtaking the flamingoes, when, greatly to her surprise, she saw a stove standing in a field with a quantity of cakes and things baking on it.

“Stove! stove!” she cried, “can you tell me whither the flamingoes have gone?”

“Yes,” replied the stove; “but first eat one of my cakes, and then I will tell you where they have gone.”

But the little girl was in too great a hurry to think of eating anything.

“We don’t eat any pastry at home,” she answered, and ran on farther, until she came in sight of an apple-tree.

“Apple-tree, apple-tree!” she cried, “can you tell me where the flamingoes have flown to?”

“First eat one of my apples,” answered the tree.—  
But the little girl replied as before,—

“We eat no apples at home,” and ran on until she came to a river of milk, the banks of which were of jelly.

“Milky river and jelly banks, tell me, oh! tell me, whither the flamingoes have flown?”

But they replied,—

"First taste us, sweet maiden, and we will tell you what we know."

"No, not now, for at home we do not waste our time in eating and drinking when we have other things of greater importance to do."

The little girl at last got very tired from all the running she had done, and was just about to sit down and rest, when she suddenly beheld a hedgehog close to her. At first she was inclined to push it out of her way, but then she thought she might prick herself, and besides the hedgehog would most likely be able to tell her something about the flamingoes; so she turned, and, with a very sweet little smile, asked it coaxingly,—

"*Dear* little hedgehog, tell me, if you can, whither the flamingoes have gone?"

The hedgehog at first looked scornfully at her, but on second thoughts it condescended to show her the way. She thanked it, and ran on until she came to a funny-looking old hut, standing on chickens' legs! which kept on going round and round like a windmill, and in it sat an old gipsy; but who was it that sat at the window playing with a golden apple? It was a nice pretty little boy, with a curly head of hair! When the little girl saw him she flew to the window, and caught the chubby little fellow in her arms; for he was no other than her lost brother, and she ran away as fast as her legs could carry her.

When the old gipsy saw what had happened she called the red flamingoes, and ordered them to overtake the little girl, who, when she saw the creatures

flying after her, ran on faster and faster, till she came to the milky river and jelly banks.

“Hide me! hide me!” she cried, “for the flamingoes are chasing me.”

“Taste us first, pretty maiden, and then we will hide you.”

She obeyed this time as quickly as she could, and then was told to hide under one of the jelly banks. The flamingoes, not noticing this, flew past; and when they were a good way off, the little girl crept from under the jelly bank, thanked it, promised to recommend it to all her friends, and ran along with her brother in her arms. But the flamingoes soon saw her, and began to fly after her again. What was she to do? Suddenly she remembered the apple-tree, and, running up to it, asked it to hide her.

“Not unless you promise to eat one of my apples,” was the reply.

There was no help for it; so the little girl took an apple, and, after she had bitten it, the apple-tree covered her over with leaves and blossoms. The flamingoes, not seeing her, flew past, as before. When she thought the coast was clear, the little girl got out from under the leaves and ran on; but the flamingoes saw her again, and were after her in a moment. They were now just over her head, and if the stove had not been quite so close to where she was, she would have been at a loss to know what to do. She climbed into the stove, and took some of the pastry in with her, and after she had eaten a cake or two, she got out again, while the flamingoes flew past.

On ran the little girl and the creatures after her. Fortunately her home was not very far off now. The birds were very close upon her; this time, in fact, their wings actually touched her face! They even tried to take away the little boy! But still on ran the little girl, tired though she was. At last she managed to get inside the house, and after shutting the doors and windows very quickly, she dropped down on the nearest chair to rest. Meanwhile the flamingoes flew round, trying their hardest to get in; but, finding that they could not succeed, they screamed and screamed till they became quite hoarse, and were obliged to return to the old gipsy without the child.

When the peasant and his wife came back from market, and saw that their little boy was quite safe and happy, they gave the little girl the handkerchief and the cake, which they had promised her, and also a little lecture on obedience when they heard the story. Of course, the little girl never forgot the lecture, and still less the flamingoes. From that day she never went out to play in the road when told to look after her little baby brother, but lived happily with her parents many years after.

### THE WITCH AND THE SISTER OF THE SUN.

IN a distant kingdom, near the World's End, lived a king and queen who had an only son, named Prince Nekita. When this prince had arrived at the age of fourteen, he went to "look up" a favourite groom of his. Now this groom had been in the habit of always telling Prince Nekita (when quite a child) some very pretty fairy tales, which the young prince had greatly enjoyed, but since the prince had come into his "teens," he had had other things to do, and had not had time to listen to these stories; but on this particular day it so happened that he had a half-holiday, and thought it would be rather a good idea to go and spend it in the stables. Away he went, and this is what the groom had to say:—

"I have something far more important than a fairy tale to tell you to-day, Prince Nekita," said the groom gravely, "and am right glad that you have come to me, for you are in great danger. Listen—the queen, your mother, will soon have a daughter, but by no means a good one; the child will grow into a dreadful old witch, and will kill your father and mother and all the grand people at court, and if you stay in the palace, she will kill you, too; so if you



wish to save your life and become a great man, you must go to the king, your father, and tell him what you have just heard—but you need not mention my name—and ask him for a certain horse, which runs faster than any bird can fly; get upon this horse and go whithersoever your eyes take you. That is all I have to say, so go at once to the king and lose not a moment. Farewell!”

After that the wonderful groom disappeared, and no one ever saw him again.

Meanwhile Prince Nekita went to the king, his father, and told him everything, not forgetting to ask for the flying horse. The king was delighted at the idea of having a daughter, but could not believe that she could turn out to be a wicked old witch; he ordered the flying horse to be brought and given to the prince, wished his handsome young son luck, and left him to mount the splendid animal, but forgot to ask whither he intended going.

The prince mounted his horse, bid all the courtiers and servants farewell, and away he flew.

Long, long, did he ride, until it suddenly struck him that he could not possibly go on riding for ever, besides he was hungry and sleepy. What was he to do? Suddenly he came upon a little hut, at the door of which sat two old women, busy embroidering. He stopped his horse and asked them whether they would let him stay with them for a day or two to rest, but they shook their old heads, saying,—

“Nay, prince, though we should be very glad indeed to let you stay with us and rest for awhile, we cannot possibly ask you in, for we have unfortunately

not very long to live. Death is already knocking at our door. But that you should not think us unkind, take this little box of needles and remember us. It may prove useful to you, for the needles are not of the common kind."

Prince Nekita took the little box, thanked the old women, and wept bitterly as he rode away, for besides feeling hungry and tired, he was very sorry for these two poor creatures. On rode the prince for a long time without meeting any one whom he could ask for something to eat, and without seeing any place where he could rest himself and his horse. At last he saw an old oak-tree; he went up to it, and asked it to shelter him for a few days; but the tree shook its branches, and replied,—

"Nay, Prince Nekita, I cannot shelter you, much as I should like to do so, for I have not long to live; death is knocking at my door!"

Prince Nekita again wept; it seemed to him that no one and nothing were to live very long.

On he rode, till at length he came to the noble dwelling of the Sister of the Sun. He stopped before the golden palace, and knocked at the door. The Sun's sister ran out to him and welcomed him warmly. She took him into her palace and gave him most delicious things to eat and drink, so that Prince Nekita felt himself in the seventh heaven of bliss, and in no hurry to leave. In fact, when the beautiful Sister of the Sun asked him to stay in her palace and make it his home, he did not think twice about it, but gratefully accepted her kind invitation; and as the years rolled on, the Sister of the Sun loved

him as dearly as if he had been her own child. She took great care of him, fed him, and clothed him in rich garments, and made a regular pet of the young prince.

But one day, after the lapse of a great many years, the prince, who had now grown into a tall handsome man, with golden hair, and a long drooping moustache, wished very much to see how things were getting on in his father's kingdom, so he got on to his flying horse and flew to the top of a great mountain, where he could see everything that was going on at home. He looked, and behold ! everybody had been eaten up ; there was not a soul alive, all the houses, shops, and streets were one mass of ruin. Even the very palace, in which he had spent his childhood, was torn down with the exception of one wing, in which dwelt his sister, the witch, by herself. He looked and wept, a thing which he had not indulged in for many a long year. He returned with a sad face and tearful eyes, to the Sister of the Sun, who felt very sorry and anxious about him, and wondered greatly what had happened.

"What is the matter ?" she asked. "I don't like to see you look so sad."

"The wind was a little too much for my eyes, madam, that is all," he replied.

But the Sister of the Sun did not believe him, and as he continued going up the mountain every day, and returning with a tearful face, she wondered more and more what the reason could be ; but she could get nothing out of him, all he answered was that the wind had been too much for his eyes. At last the

Sister of the Sun could stand it no longer, she was determined to find out the cause and help him if she could. So she commanded what little wind there was to stop, and when the prince returned from his journey up the mountain with a tearful face, he did not know how to answer her inquiries, and was at last obliged to tell the truth. The Sister of the Sun was very sorry and tried to comfort him, but all in vain, he felt too wretched, and would do nothing but go to the mountain and weep for the loss of his friends and his country. One day he came to the Sister of the Sun and told her that he intended to visit his father's kingdom and see what had been done to it. At first the Sister of the Sun would not hear of it, but on seeing that the prince looked greatly disappointed, she consented, and gave him a comb, two apples, and a blessing as parting gifts.

“Take this comb and these apples, for they are useful things to have ; when you throw the comb on the ground an oak forest will spring up ; as to the apples, if you give them to some very, very old people they will instantly become young, and my blessing will keep you from harm. Good-bye, dear prince, and come back to me soon.”

Prince Nekita, after embracing her, rode off on his flying horse. He soon came to the old oak-tree, and found it nearly dead, with the exception of a few branches ; he felt sorry for the old tree, and remembering the comb he threw it down on the ground and up sprang a large and beautiful oak forest. The tree was delighted, it thanked the prince for his kindness, and promised to help him if it could. Away

went the prince until he reached the hut where he had found the two old women, who were now lying on their death-beds. He gave them each an apple, which they ate and became quite young and well again. They almost embraced the prince in their joy, and gave him a handkerchief which would turn into a large lake when thrown down on the ground. At last Prince Nekita arrived at his skeleton home, and the witch, his sister, came out to meet him, smiling, and after kissing him most affectionately, led him into a chamber in the remaining wing of the palace.

“Sit down, dear brother,” she said, “and amuse yourself just as much as you like, while I go and get the dinner ready; for I have no servants here, I hate to have them about me.”

So saying, the witch disappeared, while Prince Nekita went to the window and looked out. How changed everything was, and how horrid all looked; the streets were covered with dead bodies, and human bones, skulls, and ruined houses lay all over the place in hopeless confusion. The poor prince shuddered, and turned his back on the window, when suddenly his eyes fell upon a harp standing in the corner of the room. He went up to it, threw off his cloak, and began playing a Russian air, when out came a little mouse from under the floor, and said in a human voice,—

“Save yourself, Prince Nekita, fly for your life! Your sister has just gone to sharpen her teeth, and unless you wish to be eaten up, you had better leave this wretched place.”

Prince Nekita did not wait to be told a second

time ; he mounted his horse and flew, while the mouse taking the prince's place by the harp, played away at it, so that the witch might not know that the prince had left. After having sharpened her teeth the witch returned, but could see no one ; even the mouse had run away into its little hole on hearing the witch approach, and was now running up and down there just as if nothing had happened. The witch was in a great rage, she howled and growled until she came to the conclusion that she had better go after her brother, so off she went in her mortar. The prince on hearing a noise behind him, looked round and saw the witch coming after him ; on he rode faster and faster, and she came closer and closer to him. At last Prince Nekita, on seeing his danger, threw down the handkerchief, and there appeared a very large lake.

While the witch was crossing this lake, the prince managed to get at a good distance off, and for some time did not see her, but after awhile he looked round and beheld her coming nearer and nearer. He was now not very far from the oak forest, which, when it saw that the prince was in danger, spread out its branches so thickly that the witch lost some time in biting her way through, while the prince neared the dwelling of the Sister of the Sun. But the witch after having got through the forest, began her pursuit once more.

"Ah!" she cried, as she came close behind the prince, "I shall catch you, you have no means of saving yourself *now*."

But she was mistaken, for after flying on and on as fast as ever he could, Prince Nekita at last reached

the dwelling of the Sister of the Sun ; he rode in and the big golden gates were closed after him. Meanwhile, the witch began thinking what she had better do to get at him. She knocked at the gates, and the Sister of the Sun, in all her dazzling beauty, came out to her.

“Let me have a pair of scales, great Sister of the Sun,” said the witch, “and see who is heavier, my brother or I ; if I am heavier I will eat him ; if *he* is heavier, he can eat me, or do whatever he likes with me !”

The Sister of the Sun laughed at this ; but, nevertheless, she agreed to the proposal, for she knew what would happen. The prince jumped on to the scales first, but hardly had the witch put her foot upon the scales, when up went the prince high in the air, and would certainly have fallen had the Sun not caught him in his arms, and taken him to his glorious home in the sky, where, to the prince's delight, the Sister of the Sun soon joined them, leaving the witch to stamp about in a tremendous rage at not having been able to eat her brother ; and I believe she is still alive, reigning near the World's End, unless some brave knight has been able to kill her.

## PRINCESS VERA THE WISE.

IN a far distant and unknown land there lived and reigned a king and queen who had three wonderfully handsome sons. So good-looking were they that the like had never been seen, especially the youngest, Akem, who was the handsomest, cleverest, and best of the three, and the greatest favourite with everybody. Their names were Egor, Vania, and the youngest was called, as we have already said, Akem.

One day the king, their father, called them to him ; and said,—

“ My dear children, I want you all to get married ; but as no one seems to please you, an idea has just struck me which I think is rather a good one. Listen. Take up your bows and arrows and shoot. You, Egor, shoot to the left ; and you, Vania, as straight as ever you can ; while you, Akem, my dearest and best of sons, shoot to the right, for I have heard that that is the lucky side, and before whatever person or thing your arrows fall, that same person or thing you must marry.”

The princes were greatly astonished, and did not quite like this idea of their father's ; for—who could tell?—the arrows might fall before some horrid object. However, they had not much time given them to think, and obey their father they *must*.



"When I have counted three," said the king, "you must let your arrows fly."

The princes stood in readiness. Prince Egor looking towards the left, Prince Vania pointing his bow and arrow straight in front of him, and Prince Akem to the right, as his father had commanded. One, two, and three!—away went the arrows. Prince Egor's arrow fell at the feet of a beautiful damsel, the daughter of a very rich nobleman. Prince Vania's fell before a fair young maiden, daughter of a wealthy merchant. But, alas for poor Prince Akem! *his* arrow fell in front of an ugly frog, that was sitting at the mouth of a large hole in the ground by the side of a pond! Prince Akem was very angry.

"What!" he cried, "am *I*, the son of a king, to marry an ugly green frog?"

His brothers laughed.

"Take it," they said, "and never mind. Bottle up your pride, dear brother, and marry the frog. You have our blessing."

But the old king was very much cut up about it, for he loved his youngest son more than anything in the world, and would have done anything to help him. But break his word, never! He had never been known to do such a thing in his life, and if he were to do it now it would be the ruin of him. No; when he once said a thing he meant it, and it could not be undone, not even for the son whom he so dearly loved and almost worshipped.

So the princes were married.

Egor to the nobleman's daughter.

Vania to the merchant's daughter.

And poor Prince Akem, after a great deal of storming, married the ugly green frog.

Some time after these grand events, the king said to his sons,—

“Tell your wives to bake me, by to-morrow morning, some very, very soft white bread; but, mind you, it must be so wonderfully white and light and soft that the like was never seen, nor ever likely to be seen again.”

Away went the princes. Egor and Vania were happy and cheerful, for they thought their wives could do everything, which, of course, was the proper way of thinking! But Prince Akem left his father's palace in rather a different frame of mind, and small blame to him, poor fellow! When he got to the hole where the frog lived he was very sad and miserable, and rather enraged as well.

“Why are you so sorrowful, my prince?” asked the frog.

“How can I possibly be otherwise?” returned Akem, somewhat impatiently. “The king, my father, has ordered me to tell you to bake him some very white bread by to-morrow morning. It must not be like the ordinary bread, but quite different from anything that has ever been seen. It must be white and light and soft, and goodness only knows what else.”

“Is that all?” said the frog. “Well, then, go to sleep, and to-morrow morning you will find all that the king, your father, requires. For the present good-night, and don't worry yourself.”

She waited (or, we should say, the frog waited) until the prince was sound asleep, then running,

or rather hopping, to the entrance of the hole, she threw off her frog-skin, and behold—a beautiful and graceful princess! But so lovely, so charming, was she that no mortal ever saw or ever even dreamt that such a being could possibly exist. Then she cried out in a voice which sounded like the sweetest music,—

“My cooks and my servants, listen to my call, and do my bidding faithfully. Bake and bring me some white bread, such as I had when I lived at the court of the king, my father.”

Next morning, when the prince woke from his slumbers, he was astonished, as well as delighted, to see some beautiful white bread lying by his side. He took it to the palace, and gave it to the king, his father, who was just as much delighted with it as his son had been, saying that it was far better than he really wanted it to be. But he again gave his sons another order for their wives. This time it was to get him a beautiful silk carpet, such a one as had never been seen before, and was not likely to be seen again.

“What has happened, my prince?” asked the frog, when Prince Akem returned from the palace, looking very dull and dreary. “Was not the bread of the right kind?”

“Yes, the bread was right enough; but the king wants you now to get him a silk carpet, something that has never been seen before, and is never likely to be seen again.”

“Cheer up, my prince,” laughed the frog. “You really must not be so down-hearted about such trifles.

Go to sleep, and to-morrow morning you will find the loveliest carpet that ever mortal eye beheld; so good-night!"

As soon as the prince fell asleep, the frog went to the entrance of the hole, changed itself into the beautiful princess as on the night before, and cried out,—

"Cold winds and warm winds, listen to my call! Hasten to the palace of the king, my father, and bring me the carpet that lies in my room. Away!"

No sooner said than done. When morning came, Prince Akem saw, to his surprise, a most beautiful as well as extraordinary carpet lying in front of his bed. On it were all the kingdoms, towns, seas, and rivers in the world, with ships sailing on the seas, and boats on the rivers. Besides all this, there were wars going on between countries; the guns were firing, and the wounded soldiers were lying about on the battle-fields. But the most surprising thing of all was that all the people, the animals, flowers, trees, grass, and everything on the carpet were alive!

Great was the astonishment at court when Prince Akem brought this wonderful carpet to his father, and greater were the thanks the young prince received.

But the king gave another order, which to Prince Akem seemed far more difficult than the others. It was that each of the young princes should bring his wife to the palace on the following day, that the king might thank them himself for all the trouble they had taken for him in trying to please him.

Prince Egor and his brother Vania went to their homes light-hearted and happy. But not so Prince

Akem ; he felt sadder and more miserable than ever, for how could he possibly take the ugly green frog to the palace? Everybody would laugh at him and pity him, which he would never be able to stand.

When the frog saw him looking so sad, she again asked him the reason.

“How can I be happy?” said the poor prince. “The king, my father, has ordered my brothers and me to bring our wives before him to-morrow to thank them himself for all the trouble they have taken. But how can I take you to my father’s court, you ugly green frog?”

“You are very rude, my prince,” replied the frog. “But never mind ; don’t be sad. Go to the palace alone, and I shall follow later. When you hear a terrible noise like thunder, and the people all dreadfully frightened and wondering what it is, tell them that it is only the frog, your wife, coming to the palace in a box.”

Next day the two elder brothers arrived with their wives at the king’s palace, and laughed at Prince Akem, saying,—

“Where is *your* wife? Why did you not bring her with you? You could easily have put her in your pocket!”

· Hardly had they said these words when there was a terrific clap of thunder, which shook the whole kingdom, and made all the people tremble.

“Be not afraid, good people,” said Prince Akem calmly. “It is only the frog, my wife, coming to the palace in a box.”

The king and all his people were rather astonished

and rushed to the balconies and windows ; and what was their amazement when they beheld a carriage of pure gold, with diamond windows, drive up to the palace-gates, with six beautiful white horses and powdered footmen ! But out of this wonderful vehicle there stepped a most beautiful princess, clad in garments of gold and silver, with such a number of diamonds about her that, together with her marvellous beauty, they dazzled the eyes of the lookers-on, and lighted up the palace and court as though by lightning. Prince Akem felt rather puzzled ; but she went straight up to him, and put her arm through his, and led him into the grand reception-room, where the king and his courtiers were waiting. They were greatly charmed with this beautiful frog-princess. As for the king himself, he was too delighted to speak or do anything. A grand feast was then ordered, and they all descended into the dining-hall, where they made merry, eating and drinking as much as they pleased, and then they proposed the health of Prince Akem and his frog-princess. The most remarkable thing about the frog-princess was that, whenever there was any wine left in her glass, she at once poured it down her left sleeve, and what little meat there was left on her plate she threw down her right sleeve.

Prince Egor's wife, having noticed this, thought she would do the same. Later on in the evening the frog-princess danced with Prince Akem. While the rest looked on as they danced, she waved her left hand three times in the air, and lo ! and behold a little pond appeared. She then waved her right hand, and

two beautiful white swans were seen sailing about on the pond.

The people stood looking on in wonder and amazement, until it became Prince Egor's turn to dance with his wife; and as they danced the fair damsel waved her left hand, just as the frog-princess had done, but, alas! she only splashed all the people with the wine. She tried her right hand, but the bones and meat which she had concealed in her sleeve flew right into the king's eyes, and hurt him very badly on the nose. He grew very angry, and ordered his guests to go to their respective homes, and trouble him no more.

Meanwhile, Prince Akem found time to run home to the frog's hole, determined that that beautiful princess should never be changed into a frog any more. He searched everywhere for the frog-skin, which he at last found and burnt. When the lovely frog-princess reached home, and found what the prince had done, she became very sad, and wept bitterly.

"Oh, Prince Akem," she cried, "what have you done? Oh, if you had but waited a little longer, all would have gone well; but now, alas! farewell! You will have a difficult task if you wish to find me again, my beloved prince; but if you want me to come back to you, take this pair of iron boots, put them on, and go to the tenth kingdom at the World's End. There you will find me waiting for you. Farewell!"

She embraced the unhappy prince, and, changing herself suddenly into a lovely white bird, flew away up into the spotless blue sky and was out of sight, leaving Prince Akem alone in his terrible and uncon-

solable grief. He tore his hair, walked to and fro in the little chamber under the earth, called himself all the most awful names he could think of; but finding that all this did not bring back his beautiful wife, he pulled on the iron boots which she had given him, and bent his way to the tenth kingdom at the World's End, though he had not the slightest idea as to where it was—he thought it must be *somewhere*, so away he went.

He walked on and on for days and days, until he met a very old man, bent with age, whose hair was white as shining silver.

“Good day, father,” said the prince.

“Good day to you, young prince. Whither are you going?” asked the old man, “and why?”

The prince told the old man his grief.

“Ah, Prince Akem! why did you do anything so silly as to burn the skin? It was not you who made it, and therefore you had no right to burn it. You see Princes Vera the Wise—as she is called in her country—is a very cunning princess, very much more learned than her father, and *he* is by no means a donkey. Well, the king, her father, got very angry with her for something, and changed his beautiful daughter into an ugly green frog for three years. These three years are now almost at an end, and if you had waited patiently Princess Vera would have been changed into her proper shape, and you would not have had all the bother of going to find her, and getting into trouble, as you are likely to do now. However, I have very little time, so I must bid you good-bye. But stop. Here is a little ball; take it, and follow



it whithersoever it goes, and stop when it stops. Farewell !”

The silver-haired old man had vanished before Prince Akem had time to thank him for his kindness. On went the prince, following the little ball, which, strange to say, rolled on and on without stopping until it came to a little hut standing on chickens' legs, and which was turning round and round like a weathercock, only much faster, so that it was impossible for any one to get in. Before the wonderful hut the ball came to a sudden standstill. The prince, who was getting hungry as well as tired, was glad to find a place where he would be sure to have something to eat and drink ; but the question was, how on earth was he to get in ? After waiting a moment to think, he at last called out,—

“Little hut ! little hut, stand still, if you can, with your front to me and your back to the forest !”

And the little hut actually obeyed.

Prince Akem entered, and found a very old, old witch, with wooden legs, sitting on a bench sharpening her iron teeth. She seemed very much astonished to see the hut come to a standstill.

“I smell the blood of a Russian ! Who is there ?” Then, looking towards the door, she beheld Prince Akem.

“Oh, it is you, Prince Akem !” she said in a kinder tone. “And what, may I ask, brought you here ?”

“Ah ! you old, grey, wooden-legged, iron-toothed old witch, could you not have the politeness to get me something to eat and drink before asking me

what I came for? You might have thought that I was hungry."

The witch laughed.

"True, my prince, it was not kind of me I admit. Come! eat, drink, and make merry!"

So saying, the old lady hobbled to a little safe, and brought out some eatables and drinkables, which she put before the prince on a little wooden table.

When Prince Akem had done eating and drinking to his perfect satisfaction, he turned to the old witch and told her his tale.

"Oh, my dear child!" exclaimed the good-natured old witch, "why did you not come before? Your wife, Princess Vera, has been here, and waited for you, and was grieved that you did not come. She has not been gone very long. She may forget you if you don't make haste now; so go at once to my dearly-beloved sister, who lives in a hut not many miles off. She may be able to tell you where your wife is."

The prince thanked the witch, and, leaving the hut, followed the little ball until it stopped before a hut similar to the last one. Here the prince cried out as before,—

"Little hut, little hut, stand still, with your front to me and your back to the forest!"

This hut also obeyed him. Prince Akem walked in, and saw an old woman, much like the first only older, but she seemed very merry.

"I smell the blood of a Russian! Who is there?" she cried, looking up at the prince and smiling. "What do you want in my humble dwelling, Prince Akem?"

"I am looking for my wife, the Princess Vera the Wise."

"I am very sorry for you, my prince," replied the good old dame, shaking her aged head, and looking as grave as her merry old face would let her. "Methinks that Princess Vera has forgotten you, for when last I saw her she talked of marrying; but I may be mistaken. She is now staying with my eldest sister, so make haste and go there, lose not a moment's time. You will find my sister spinning gold thread, and winding it on a golden spindle. This spindle is your wife. Don't laugh, but listen. Take the spindle, break it into three parts, and throw the two ends behind you and the middle in front of you, and—well, you will see for yourself what will happen. And now go."

Prince Akem left her, much amused at the idea of his wife being a spindle. On he went after the ball, until they again stopped in front of another chicken-legged hut that turned round and round like the two former.

"Stand still, little hut, with your front to me and your back to the forest!" said the prince.

The hut did so, and the prince walked in. Here he found an old, old woman—in fact, she was so very, very old that there was nothing left of her but bones! She sat spinning away at some gold thread, and then began winding it on a golden spindle. She did not notice the prince, nor did she make any sign when he took hold of the spindle and broke it into three parts, throwing the two ends behind him; but he had hardly thrown the middle part down when who should

stand before him, in all her great beauty and grace, but the lovely Princess Vera the Wise!

“Ah! my beloved prince, if you had been a little later I might have forgotten you, and married some one else, for in this country one's memory fails one sometimes!”

So saying, Princess Vera embraced the happy prince, and they left the hut together. After walking a short distance, Princess Vera waved her right hand, and immediately a beautiful flying carpet of gold, worked with silver and diamonds, appeared, and on this carpet the happy pair seated themselves, and flew to the kingdom of Prince Akem's father.

The king was delighted at the sight of his beloved son and his charming daughter-in-law. Princess Vera's father came to stay at the palace for a few days, to make the acquaintance of his son-in-law and all his relations. Before he left a grand ball was given, to which everybody was invited. After that, Princess Vera, her father, and Prince Akem returned to the tenth kingdom at the World's End.

Princess Vera's father made Prince Akem his heir, for the good king had no son of his own.

## COUNT DANIEL NATHANIEL.

ONCE upon a time there lived a rich countess, who had two beautiful children, a boy and a little girl. The boy was called Daniel Nathaniel, and the girl was named Tania.

Well, one day there came to the noble mansion an old fairy, who asked to see the countess. The countess, being very fond of fairies, received the old witch warmly, and asked her what she wanted.

"Dear countess," began the fairy, "I have come from a distance on purpose to bring you a diamond ring, which I want you, before you die, to give to your son; as long as he wears this ring on his finger he will be wealthy and happy all the days of his life. But this is not all. I have something of greater importance to say about the ring, which is that he must on no account marry any one unless he can find a girl whose finger the ring will fit; if he should disobey me, then, bad luck attend him!"

So saying, the fairy disappeared without leaving the room.

The countess was so delighted that she became ill and soon died of joy, not forgetting, however, to give her son the ring and to tell him all the fairy had told her.

Years passed on, and the son grew up to be a wonder-

fully handsome, rich young count, and began to look round for a wife. One took his fancy, but the ring was too big for her finger; another took his fancy but in this case the ring was too small. At last he determined to go in search of some other fair damsel in another kingdom. He rode, and rode through many kingdoms, towns, and countries, but all in vain; nowhere could he find a wife whose finger would fit the ring, so he returned home sad and low-spirited.

"What is the matter, brother?" asked his beautiful sister Tania. "Why are you so sad?"

He told her his troubles.

"What a strange thing," laughed Tania, looking at the ring on her brother's finger.

"I wonder whether it will fit you, Tania?"

And the young count took the ring off his own finger and tried it on his sister's. What was their surprise to find that the ring fitted Tania to perfection.

"Tania! Tania;" exclaimed the brother, "I shall marry you, and none but you, so go and get ready."

Tania at first laughed at her brother, thinking that he was only joking; but when she saw he was in earnest, she was very angry. She was a sweet, gentle girl as a rule, but this sudden outbreak on her brother's part was rather too much for her.

"Who ever heard of a brother marrying his sister?" she exclaimed. "No, that shall never be!"

And throwing the ring on to the floor she left the room, and was about to leave the house also, but on reaching the street-door her strength gave way, and she sank down on the door-step and began to cry.

At that moment two old women passed by ; but on seeing so fair a maiden in tears, they stopped and asked her what was the matter.

The young countess, after a great deal of hesitation, told them her story.

“Do not cry, dear child,” said they, “but go into your own room and put these four dolls in it, one in each corner. The count, your brother, will then knock at your door and call you. Now, you must put yourself right in the middle of the room ; and when he comes, you must answer, ‘I shall come in a moment!’ but do not move while you speak, or woe betide you !”

So saying, the old women went away, and the countess went up to her own room and did what she was told. Meanwhile, the brother dressed himself up in his wedding garments and called for his sister, who stood in the middle of her room and answered,—

“I shall come in a moment.”

While the dolls in the corners sang,—

“Peep oh, Count Daniel !  
Peep oh, Nathaniel !  
A brother his sister  
Is anxious to wed.  
The earth will not let him,  
But takes her instead.”

Tania felt the earth beneath her soften, and she sank lower and lower ; but she was not afraid, nor did she cry for help, her only wish being to get away from her brother.

Count Daniel still called her, and louder than

ever, but he always received the same answer, while the dolls sang as before,—

“Peep oh, Count Daniel !  
Peep oh, Nathaniel !  
A brother his sister  
Is anxious to wed.  
The earth will not let him,  
But takes her instead.”

Again the count called, and again received the same answer, while the dolls sang their song. By this time nothing but the young countess's head was visible.

Count Daniel grew very impatient, and called louder to his sister. But this time, getting no answer, he flew into a rage, and breaking open the door, rushed into the room ; but no sister could he find ! He looked round, but saw nothing except the dolls, who kept on singing their wonderful song, until the count, in a still greater rage, took an axe, cut off their heads, and threw them into the fire.

But to return to the Countess Tania. She sank and sank, until she reached an underground kingdom. She walked on and on along a pretty country road, when she suddenly beheld a funny little wooden hut, at the door of which sat a beautiful girl reading. She was so exactly like Tania, that the young countess might easily have thought that it was a reflection of herself in a looking-glass. When this lovely girl saw Tania coming she jumped up, and running up to her, embraced her warmly, just as if she had known her all her life.



"My darling Countess Tania!" she cried, "whatever made you come here? You are in great danger, for this hut does not belong to me, but to a wicked old witch, who, however, is not at home just now; but when she *does* come, oh! beware, dear countess!"

Tania was rather startled at this, especially when she heard the word *witch*, for she had no very great love for the creatures, and certainly not for wicked ones. However, as she was very sleepy and hungry, she said that if she could only have something to eat and drink, and get a nice hiding-place, she would not mind. This was soon granted her.

When she was safely hidden the old witch came in.

"I smell the blood of a Russian!" was her first greeting.

"Nonsense, little mother!" laughed the young girl, whose name was Varia. "It was only an old man who came to have a drink."

"Why did you not keep him?"

"Because he was too old for your teeth."

"I don't believe you! But, at any rate, in future mind you keep all who dare come to my hut, and don't let them out again!"

When morning came the witch went out, while Tania and Varia sat down and talked to each other; but when evening came Tania had to hide herself again.

"I smell the blood of a Russian!" cried the witch, when she returned.

"Nay, mother, it was only an old woman who

came, but she was so very tough that she would have made your teeth quite blunt."

"That matters not. I told you that you should always keep any one who ventured into my hut, be they tough or tender!"

"Very well, mother; the next time any one comes I shall be sure to keep them."

Early on the following morning the witch flew away, while the two girls sat laughing and talking with each other, quite forgetting all about the old witch this time. They did not notice the hours go by, but talked on, when suddenly, to their great horror, the witch stood before them.

Tania nearly fainted at the sight of the old hag, with a skeleton leg, and goodness knows what kind of a nose, it was such a very long one! But Varia was not in the least frightened; she recovered from the sudden shock which she received when she first beheld her in a moment. She rose, and taking Tania by the hand-introduced her to the witch, saying,—

"You told me that if any person should come while you were out I was to keep them. I have done as you wished; this is Countess Tania, sister of Count Daniel Nathaniel."

"Very well," replied the witch. "I am glad to know you, countess. But why are you two girls sitting here with your hands folded? Get some wood and light the fire, and look alive."

They obeyed; and when all was done, the witch turned to Tania and said,—

"Get into the stove and sit on this iron tray, so that I can push you in without any trouble."

“I think,” said Varia, “that you had better get on to the tray yourself, little mother, and show the countess how to do it; for she is very stupid, and will never be able to get into the stove unless you show her the way.”

The witch jumped up into the stove and lay down in the middle of the tray. No sooner had she done this than Varia shut the stove-door, while Tania poked the fire up. After that they ran out of the hut, taking with them a red silk handkerchief, which belonged to the witch.

They ran on and on, for a very long time, when Tania, suddenly looking back, beheld the dreadful old witch coming after them. When Varia heard this, she threw down the handkerchief, and in another moment there appeared a sea of fire.

This was too much for the old witch. She tried hard two or three times to fly over, but in vain; the flames caught her, and she fell into the sea and died.

As to the girls, they went on and on, until they came to a garden, where they sat down to rest. There was a very pretty house in it, which seemed rather familiar to Tania, but she was much too tired to look at it properly. The servants of the house, on seeing them, ran to their master, saying,—

“There are two very beautiful girls in your garden, sir, and we think that one of them must be your sister, the Countess Tania; but which is she it is impossible to say, as they are so exactly alike.”

Count Daniel Nathaniel—for it was he—ordered them to be brought before him. When they came,

he was certain that one of them was his sister ; but which one? As Tania would make no sign, the count tried the diamond ring ; but it fitted both girls.

“ Let us do this,” said he, at last, in a low voice, to one of his servants. “ Let us take a pair of sheep’s bladders, put them on my arm, while you thrust a knife into them. The blood will flow, and my sister, who will think I am being killed, is sure to make herself known.”

This was done. The blood flowed, and the brother fell as though dead into the arms of his servants, who stood round in readiness to receive him ; while Tania, thinking her brother was really dead, threw her arms round his neck, exclaiming,—

“ Oh, my dear, dear brother !”

The count jumped up, embraced her, and welcomed her new friend.

Next day the count gave his sister in marriage to a very handsome young prince, while he himself married her friend Varia, who, it turned out, was the daughter of a king, but had been stolen when quite a child by the wicked old witch who had died in the fiery sea.

Count Daniel Nathaniel made his sister wear a red ribbon round her neck with her name on it, and his wife, the Princess Varia, a blue one with her name, so that he and his friends might know which was which.

## THE WITCH.

ONCE upon a time there lived an old man and his wife, but the man becoming a widower soon married again. It so happened that the first wife had left a daughter, whom the second wife, of course, hated and wanted to get rid of in some way or other.

One day the father went out on business, leaving his little girl with her step-mother. Scarcely had he left the house when the woman said to the girl,—

“Go to your aunt, my sister, and ask her for a needle and thread to make you a dress.”

Now this step-mother's sister was a wicked old witch. The little girl not being at all stupid, and knowing this, went first to her real aunt, her mother's sister, to ask her advice.

“Good-day, aunty !” said she.

“Good-day, my dear. What brings you here ?”

“My step-mother has told me to go to her sister, the witch, to ask for a needle and thread to sew me a dress, but I thought I had better come to you first, for your advice.”

“When you want to get away from the witch,” began the aunt, “the trees will wave their branches in your face to prevent you from passing, but you must tie them up with the silk ribbons, which I shall give you. Then the gates will creak and shut with

all their force against you, but you must put some oil in the holes and on the hinges. Then the dogs will bark and want to bite you, but you must give them some bread; then a cat will want to scratch your eyes out, but you must give her some ham. And then a maid will want to boil you, but you must give her a handkerchief; all this you must do, or you will never be able to leave the witch."

Away went the little girl, on and on until she reached a hut, where an old witch with a wooden leg, was sitting spinning.

"Good-day, aunty!" said the child.

"Good-day to you, my dear," replied the witch. "What brings you here?"

"My step-mother has sent me to you for a needle and thread to sew me a dress."

"Very well," said the witch, "sit you down in my place and spin, while I go and get the things you want."

The little girl obeyed, and the witch left the room and told her maid-servant,—

"Go, heat the bath, hot enough to boil my niece, for I want to make my dinner off her."

When the maid came to fetch the little girl, she found her nearly half-dead with fright.

"Dear maid," she said, giving her a handkerchief, "don't put so much wood in the stove, but pour more cold water in the bath."

The maid obeyed, for she was so delighted with her present.

After awhile the witch came to the window, and asked,—

"Are you boiling, niece? Are you boiling, my dear?"

"Yes, aunty! Yes, dear aunty."

When the witch had gone away, a cat came running up to the little girl, and wanted to scratch her eyes out; but the child gave it some ham, much to the animal's delight, and then she asked it how she could best run away?

"Here," said the cat, "are two things which will save you from the witch, a comb and a towel; take them and run away. When you have gone a little distance, you must put your ear to the ground, and if you hear her coming near, throw down the towel, and a large river will appear. If the witch manages to cross the water, you must again put your ear to the ground, and as soon as she is near, throw down the comb and it will become a very dark forest, through this the witch will be unable to pass. Now go."

The little girl took the comb and towel, thanked the cat, and ran away. In the yard the dogs barked and wanted to bite her, but she gave them some bread, and they let her pass; then the gates began to creak and shut in her face, but she put some oil in the holes and on their hinges, they, too, let her pass; then the trees began waving their branches in her face, so she tied them up with silk ribbons, and they also let her pass.

Now when the witch came to the window, asking as before,—

"Are you boiling, niece? Are you boiling, my dear?"

The cat replied in the little girl's voice,—

“Yes, aunty! Yes, my dear aunty!”

But the witch was beginning to get very hungry, and also very angry. She rushed into the room in a rage, but on seeing that the little girl was not there she became furious, and scolded the maid for not having made the bath hot enough.

“I have served you for many a year,” the maid answered, “but you never gave me so much as a rag for my head, but that little girl gave me a handkerchief.”

The witch then ran to the cat and beat the unfortunate animal, telling it that it had no right to let the little girl go, but that it ought to have scratched her eyes out.

“I have served you so long, and you never gave me a bone all the time, while *she* gave me some ham.”

Away went the old witch and scolded the dogs, the gates, and the trees.

The dogs answered her, and said,—

“We have served you so long, and you have never even given us any corn, but *she* gave us some bread.”

The gates answered her, and said,—

“We have served you for many years, but you never put any grease on our hinges, while *she* poured some oil on them.”

Then the trees said,—

“We have been with you for very many years, but you never tied so much as a thread round us, while *she* tied us up with silken ribbons.”

Finding that she could do nothing, or get any



sympathy from those around her, the witch started off after her niece. But the little girl put her ear to the ground, as the cat had told her, and when she heard the witch coming she threw down the towel, and a very large river appeared ; then she ran on a little farther and again put her ear to the ground, and heard that the old witch had crossed over and was coming nearer towards her. She ran on, and then threw down the comb, and immediately a very dense forest sprang up, through which the wicked old woman could not pass, though she tried very hard ; but all in vain, she was obliged to return home. What she had for her dinner I do not know.

When the little girl's father came home, and saw that the child was not there, he asked his wife,—

“Where is my little daughter?”

“She has gone to her aunt to fetch a needle and thread,” answered the wife. “She will be back soon.”

And much to the woman's astonishment, her little step-daughter *did* very soon put in an appearance.

Her father at once asked her where she had been.

“My step-mother sent me to *her* sister, who is a wicked old witch, and who wanted to eat me up.”

“But how did you get away?”

The child told him the whole story, how she went to her real aunt first, how the cat had helped her, and all she had done.

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Her father was furious with his wife, and ordered her at once to be shot. And from that day he and his little daughter lived in happiness, peace, and plenty. I went there a little while ago and drank their health and made merry.

## MARY AND NETTY.

THERE once lived an old man with his daughter ; a very pretty, gentle, and industrious girl was Mary. Her father was very fond of her, and she was very fond of her father, so that they lived very happily for some time, until it unfortunately occurred to the old man, that Mary must very often find it dull all by herself, with no one to talk to, as they lived rather far from their friends, and as for the old man himself he was out the greater part of the day, so what did he do but get married again. This time, however, he was unfortunate in his choice ; the new wife turned out to be a bad-tempered, cruel woman, and, worse still, she had a daughter just like her. Mary's life was now by no means a paradise ; both mother and daughter hated her and were jealous of her beauty and sweet temper. The old man gradually saw what a sad mistake he had made, and how poor Mary was disliked. But one day he was more than horrified when his wife told him that she could not and would not have Mary in the same house any longer, and that he was to take her into the forest and leave her there, so that the wild beasts might kill her and eat her up.

It so happened that the old man was very easy, and could be made to do almost anything ; his wife

knowing this, kept on nagging him till, finding there was no help for it, he harnessed his horse to the cart, and consented to take Mary to the forest.

They drove and drove for some time without finding a suitable place to leave Mary in. At last they came to a little mud hut which they thought would be just the thing.

They made a log fire, and brought in a bag of oatmeal and a spinning-wheel, which the old man had thoughtfully provided for his daughter.

"You must not let the fire go out, Mary, so that when you feel hungry, you can make yourself some porridge. Don't attempt to leave the hut, but sit down and spin; to-morrow I will come and see how you are getting on."

So saying, the old man kissed his daughter, and drove away.

When Mary was left alone she sat down to spin until evening, then she made some porridge and put it on the fire. When it began to boil, Mary was greatly astonished to see a little mouse come out from under the floor.

"Please give me a little porridge, Mary," it said.

She did so, and after thanking her, the mouse ran away again.

When Mary had finished her supper, she went on with her spinning. Suddenly, just at midnight, she heard a noise at the door, and on looking up was horrified at seeing a bear come in.

"Put the light out, girl," said he, "and let us have a game at blind-man's buff. Take this bell and run

about ringing, while I tie up my eyes and try to catch you."

Mary was very much alarmed, as you may well imagine, and stood still, not knowing what to do or where to hide. Suddenly, up came the little mouse from under the floor, and jumped on to Mary's shoulders, saying,—

"Give me the bell, Mary, while you go and hide on the stove."

Mary obeyed, and the mouse commenced running all round the room, ringing the bell as hard as it could, and the bear after it. At last the bear got so cross that he began to throw wood at the mouse, thinking it was Mary, but he missed every time.

"You are a splendid runner," he said. "You really do know how to play at blind-man's buff. In the morning I will send you some horses and plenty of gold as a reward."

After that the bear left.

Next morning the woman told her husband that he might go into the forest if he liked and see how many of Mary's bones were left.

When the old man had gone, his wife sat down by the window, waiting, and wondering whether her husband would find Mary alive or only her bones.

She sat there for a long time, when up jumped her little dog, who was lying on the window-sill, and began to bark,—

"Bow-wow-wow! Mary and the old man are coming back with bags of gold, a troop of horses, and loads of goods."

"You are a wicked, lying little dog," cried the

woman, "the old man is more likely coming home with Mary's bones in a bag."

But at that moment the gates were thrown open and a troop of horses ran into the yard, while Mary and her father were sitting in a cart, loaded with gold and all kinds of good things.

The woman got red with rage, exclaiming,—

"You must take *my* daughter to-morrow, old man. Netty is much cleverer, and is sure to bring double what Mary has brought."

So the next day the old man took Netty into the forest, and provided her in the same way as he had done for his own daughter.

Netty had hardly put the porridge on the fire, when the same little mouse came out and asked her to give it some, but Netty cried out angrily,—

"Anything else, you horrid old thing!"

And taking up a piece of wood, Netty threw it at the mouse, who ran away disgusted. Netty then ate up all the porridge and went to bed.

At midnight our friend the bear walked in.

"Come, girl," he said, "let us have a game at blind-man's buff; here is a bell, take it and run about ringing it, while I try to catch you with my eyes closed."

Netty, who was dreadfully frightened, took the bell and began running about ringing it, but her hands trembled and her knees shook frightfully.

"You will be killed if you don't run fast enough, you bad-tempered, horrid girl!" cried the little mouse, coming from under the floor.

Next morning the woman told her husband to go

to the forest to fetch Netty, and bring all the gold and good things which she was sure Netty had got.

Away drove the old man into the forest, while his wife sat down by the window and watched.

After some time her little dog came into the room, barking as before,—

“Bow-wow-wow! My master is coming home with Netty, but neither gold nor horses have they got, and Netty is nearly dead.”

“Oh, you wicked, wicked, bad dog, to lie in that way; wait till you see what bags of gold, what troops of horses, and other good things Netty is bringing with her.”

But the little dog was right; the old man came home with nothing but Netty, and there was not very much of her, as she was almost dead.

With some difficulty they at last managed to get her out of the cart and took her into the house.

The bad-tempered woman shortly after died of envy and disgust, but no one was particularly grieved at this.

Mary married a rich and handsome young man, and lived very happily ever after. But what became of Netty I do not know; anyhow, let us hope that she is a better girl, and keeping house for her old father.

## THE ROBBERS.

THERE lived once a very rich Russian peasant with his wife, and a very pretty daughter, named Alyonushka.

One day the peasant and his wife were asked to a wedding in the village. They were just about to start when Alyonushka—who was to be left alone to look after the hut—said to her mother,—

“Oh, mamma! I am so much afraid of being left all by myself.”

“Well, my dear,” replied her mother, “go and ask your girl friends to come and spend the day with you.”

When her parents had gone, Alyonushka ran to invite her friends; each girl brought with her some work to do; one sewed, another spun, a third wove, in fact they had each something to occupy their time while they talked and laughed.

But one of the girls who was sewing dropped her thimble on the ground, and it rolled away and fell into the cellar below; so she ran down the wooden stairs to find it. She at last, after some difficulty, found it, and was about to return when, to her horror and surprise, she saw—a man!—a robber emerge from a dark corner. She was about to cry for help, but the man shook his finger at her, saying,—



“Look out ! don’t tell any one that I am here, or—you are a dead woman.”

The girl promised, and ran up the stairs trembling from head to foot, and as white as a ghost. She told one of the girls what she had heard and seen, and that girl repeated it to another, so that very soon all the girls, with the exception of Alyonushka, knew of the robber, and at once prepared to leave.

“Where are you going ?” asked Alyonushka in surprise. “I asked you to spend the day with me, and now you have not been here very long and you want to go away ; you might wait for my father and mother’s return.”

But no, the girls said they were obliged to go. One said she had to fetch home the cows out of the fields ; another said she had to get some wood, and so on, till at last they all went away, leaving Alyonushka to herself.

When the robber heard all the girls go, he came up into the room where Alyonushka sat.

“Good evening, my pretty girl !” he said.

“Good evening,” replied the girl in surprise.

The man looked round him, but seeing nothing that he fancied, went into the back yard to look at some goods in the cellars there.

Alyonushka, guessing who he was and what it was he wanted, flew to the back door and locked it ; leaving the window—which was very high from the ground—open, and putting out the light, she waited to see what would happen.

The robber, when he found the door locked, began

to knock, but finding that this was useless, he cried out,—

“Open the door! open the door! or I shall kill you.”

“All right!” laughed Alyonushka, “but I am not going to open the door for you; if you want to come in, climb in at the window.”

As she said this, she took up a hatchet, and went to the window where, in a very short time, the robber's head appeared; she sprang at it, and with one good blow she cut it off.

“I suppose,” thought she, “that in a short time, the other robbers, his companions, will turn up. What am I to do then?”

Suddenly a thought struck her, and she wrapped the robber's head in a handkerchief, and then brought in his dead body, which she cut up in little bits and put into small bags. She had hardly done this when the other robbers arrived at the window of the hut, but saw nothing, on account of its being so dark inside.

“Have you got anything, brother?” asked one of them to Alyonushka, thinking she was the robber.

“Yes,” returned Alyonushka, in the robber's voice, “here are his bags of gold, a ham, and some butter.” So saying, she threw the bags, with the cut portions of the robber, and his head out to his companions.

“Well, come on then!” they cried to the supposed robber.

“Not yet,” replied Alyonushka. “Go home, brothers, while I look about me, maybe there is more gold about. Go ahead!”

When the robbers had left, she stood laughing to herself until her parents came home, and asked her what it was that amused her so.

Alyonushka told them the whole story, and how she had killed the robber *herself*, and how she had managed to cheat his companions. Many were the praises she received from all sides.

The whole village soon got to know of her brave deed, and thought her a wonderfully clever girl.

But to return to the robbers. When they got home that night, delighted with what they thought were bags of gold, they laughed, drank, sang and danced right merrily. At last one of them proposed to open the bags and count the gold ; but what was their dismay and sorrow when they beheld their dead brother robber ? A shrill cry of anger, as well as of grief, arose from the once merry lips, and filled the gloomy caves with howls, like those of wolves in want of prey.

“ Ah ! ” cried one of them, “ it must be that wicked girl, the peasant’s daughter, who has done this vile deed, for she did not go to the wedding with her parents, but stayed at home to take care of the house.”

“ The wretch ! ” cried all the robbers together, “ we will pay her out for this ; come, let some of us go tomorrow morning, dress up like young princes, and ask the peasant for his daughter in marriage.”

This was agreed to, with great applause.

When morning came, two or three of the robbers dressed themselves up in rich princely clothes, and rode off to the peasant, and asked him to give them

Alyonushka in marriage, and that he was welcome to choose one of them for her husband.

The peasant was delighted at the idea of such rich princes wanting to marry his daughter. But Alyonushka was by no means glad, for she knew by their voices that they were the robbers to whom she had thrown out the remains of their brother.

"Dear father," said she, "these are no princes, but the robbers, who came to steal your goods last night."

"Nonsense, girl!" cried her father angrily, "you can see by their dress that they are princes."

Still Alyonushka cried and begged her father not to give her away, but all in vain.

"If you don't marry now, and accept one of these good men," said her father, "we shall turn you out of the house."

Poor girl, what was she to do, but obey her father? So she chose one of them who was called the "Robber Fool," on account of his good-nature.

The wedding took place, and everything was as grand as it could possibly be, money seemed to be no object there.

After the wedding the robbers and the unfortunate Alyonushka rode off to the forest. No sooner were they out of sight of the villagers than they began plotting against Alyonushka.

"How shall we be revenged on her?" asked one.

"Oh! don't think of doing anything to her just yet," replied the Robber Fool; "let her live at least one day."

"All right," said the captain of the band.

They put Alyonushka into a little room, and then went down and made merry till nightfall.

"Now we had better go and kill that girl," cried one.

"No, brothers," returned the Fool, "let her live till the morning."

"But, Fool," said they, "she may run away."

"No, brothers, I shall look after her."

The robbers agreed to this, and fell fast asleep. While the Fool went up to the little room in which Alyonushka was kept prisoner.

"Let me go out into the forest," begged Alyonushka of her husband, "or I shall die for want of fresh air."

"Impossible! Suppose my brothers were to hear or to see you?"

"Oh, no! I shall be so careful not to make any noise; you might let me down through this window."

"How am I to know that you would not run away?"

"No, I won't; you can tie a rope round my waist and let me down. When I pull, you can draw me up again, do you see?"

The Fool tied the rope round her, and let her down through the window.

Now Alyonushka was a very cunning young person; so as soon as she reached the ground, she untied the rope from round her waist, and seeing a goat quite close, she tied the unfortunate animal by the horns, and pulling the rope gently, called out in a low voice,—

"Pull me up!"

And away she ran as fast as ever her legs could carry her.

The Fool meanwhile began pulling at the rope, while the goat, which evidently did not like the position it was placed in, cried out,—

“Me-ke-ke! Me-ke-ke! Me-ke-ke!” as loud as ever it could.

“What on earth are you making all that row about?” asked the Fool, thinking it was Alyonushka whom he was drawing up. “My brothers will be sure to hear you if you keep going on like that, and will murder you.”

But the goat cared little for what the Fool said, and went on crying all the louder—“Me-ke-ke! Me-ke-ke!”

The Fool at last pulled up the rope, but what was his fright at beholding the goat and not his wife.

“Oh! the bad girl,” he cried, “she has run away, and cheated me after all.”

When morning came the robbers went up to the little room to fetch Alyonushka.

“Where is your young wife?” they asked.

“Gone!” said the Fool.

“We told you so, we said she would be sure to run away if we did not kill her at once, but you *would* save her. O, you Fool, you Fool! you really *are* a Fool. But we must lose no time, we must chase her and catch her.”

So they mounted their horses, and rode off with their dogs, after Alyonushka.

Meanwhile the girl had run a good way, when she

suddenly heard the barking of the dogs, and the galloping of horses behind her.

She quickly climbed up an old oak-tree, and sat down on one of its branches, where she was completely hidden.

As the horsemen came riding along, Alyonushka saw they were the robbers, and began trembling, especially when all the dogs made a sudden rush at the tree, and stood barking round it.

"It seems as though she is hidden in this old tree, but no one can see anything, it is so thick," said one of them.

"We shall soon find out," said the captain, as he threw his sharp javelin up into the oak. It flew right to where Alyonushka sat, and wounded her in the knee. But she was as brave as she was cunning; and before the javelin could fall on the ground she seized it, and wiping the blood off it with her handkerchief, threw it back to the robbers, who looked at it carefully, but finding that there was no blood on it, they rode away.

Alyonushka jumped down from the tree and ran on as fast as her wounded knee would let her, till she again heard the robbers galloping in her direction; just then she noticed a poor old peasant with a cart full of boats for sale.

"Hide me, little father," she cried, "hide me under the last boat in your cart."

The man looked at her in surprise, and said,—

"But a maiden so beautifully dressed as you would soil her clothes under those boats."

"Never mind, little father; hide me for goodness'

sake, as some robbers are chasing me, and I want to get away from them ; please hide me."

The man, full of pity for so charming a girl, threw off his boats, and putting her under the very last one, threw the boats on again.

He had hardly finished when up rode the robbers, who asked him,—

"Have you seen any richly-dressed maiden come this way?"

"No, gentlemen, I have not."

"You lie! Throw off your boats at once, and let us see ; she may be hidden under them."

The peasant threw them off one by one, as slowly as he could, till he came to the two or three last ones, then he said,—

"You see, gentlemen, there is nothing here!"

Off went the robbers, while Alyonushka asked the old peasant to let her out.

She ran and ran until she heard the robbers galloping at some distance behind her ; just at that moment she saw another old peasant with a cart full of leather.

"Hide me, little father," she said, "under the last bit of leather in your cart, for there are some robbers coming after me, and I don't want them to find me."

The peasant hid her, and up came the robbers, who asked as before,—

"Have you seen a richly-dressed maiden come this way?"

"No, I have not."

"You lie! Throw off your leather, she may be hidden in your cart."



The peasant threw off all the leather with the exception of the two last pieces.

"You see there is nothing here," said he.

Away rode the robbers, while Alyonushka, as soon as she got out of the cart, ran on again until, to her great delight, she beheld her home. As it was midnight by the time she reached the hut, she naturally found it in darkness, so she climbed into the back yard, and lay down and hid herself in some hay, and soon fell fast asleep.

Alyonushka did not wake from her peaceful slumbers until she felt a very uncomfortable grab with a hay-rake. She caught hold of it lightly, as she did not wish to get hurt, nor would she get out of the hay until she heard the voice of the raker.

"Whoever is in this hay?" she at last heard her father exclaim. "Get out, whoever it is!"

Up sprang Alyonushka and embraced her much astonished parent.

"Upon my word!" cried the old man, "how on earth did *you* get here?"

Alyonushka told her father the whole story in a few words, and said that she thought the robbers would be coming to the hut presently.

The peasant at once called in some policemen, and made several other small preparations to welcome the robbers in case they arrived, while Alyonushka took care to hide herself.

They had not to wait long before the robbers made their appearance. They rode up to the hut, and walked in; the peasant received them with great kindness, and asked them how his daughter was getting on.

"Oh, she is all right," they answered; "she is at home keeping house."

"Indeed!" said the peasant.

He then left the room and brought in Alyonushka.

"Who is this?" he asked them.

The robbers looked foolish, but said not a word. They were immediately seized and marched off to prison. But what became of the Robber Fool I don't know; however, I hope he is quite well.

## IVASHKO AND THE WITCH.

IN a pleasant little Russian village a long, long time ago, there lived an old peasant and his wife, who had an only son, by name Ivashko, whom they dearly loved.

One bright summer morning Ivashko asked his parents to let him go fishing in a little lake hard by.

"Fishing!" exclaimed his mother, "how can so small a boy as you go a-fishing? You would surely drown yourself!"

"No, mother dear!" replied the boy, "I will not drown myself, but will bring you some fish for supper. So please let me go!"

The old woman at last consented, and, dressing him up in a little white shirt and a red sash, let him go.

Ivashko, when he came to the lake, got into his father's little boat and cried,—

"Little boat, little boat, swim farther!  
Little boat, little boat, swim farther!"

Away swam the little boat, far into the middle of the lake, and Ivashko began fishing. He caught so many fish that the little boat soon became quite full. Still he went on catching more, when he suddenly heard his father's voice calling to him,—

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“ Ivashko, my son,  
I have brought thee a bun !  
Come nearer to me,  
I have food here for thee ! ”

So Ivashko said to the little boat,—  
“ Swim across, little boat, to the shore, for my  
father is calling me.”

Back went the little boat to the side of the lake,  
where the father stopd waiting. He gave his little  
son something to eat and drink, and then, taking all  
the fish out of the boat, let Ivashko go on with his  
fishing.

“ Little boat, little boat, swim farther ! ”

cried the boy.

When he had got to the middle he commenced  
fishing again, and caught still more fish than he had  
before.

After a little while he heard his mother's voice  
calling him,—

“ Ivashko, my son,  
I have brought thee a bun !  
Come nearer to me,  
I have food here for thee ! ”

Ivashko again told his boat to swim to the shore,  
and, giving his mother the fish, he took his food, and  
returned to fishing.

It so happened that a wicked old witch had been  
listening to the call of the boy's parents, and won-  
dered whether she could imitate the peasants' voices,  
and get Ivashko and the fish, for she was very hungry.  
So she went to the shore, and called out in a harsh  
voice,—

“Ivashko, my son,  
I have brought thee a bun!  
Come nearer to me,  
I have food here for thee!”

But Ivashko knew better. He knew that the voice was not that of his parents, but of a well-known witch; so he told his little boat to swim away from the shore and more towards the other side of the lake.

The witch, seeing that it was useless to call Ivashko unless she had a voice like his mother's, began thinking what she had better do. Then a sudden idea struck her, and she ran off to a blacksmith, and cried,—

“Blacksmith! blacksmith! make me a thin voice like that of Ivashko's mother, or I will eat you up, and not leave a bone in remembrance of you!”

The blacksmith, greatly alarmed, sat down at once to make the thin voice, leaving his other work till later.

In the evening the old witch went to the shore, and called out in the thin voice,—

“Ivashko, my son,  
I have brought thee a bun!  
Come nearer to me,  
I have food here for thee!”

The voice was so like that of Ivashko's mother that the boy thought it was she, and told the boat to swim towards the shore. But, alas! what was his horror when the witch suddenly seized him and his fish, and took them home to her hut, where she told her daughter, Alenka, to heat the stove and bake Ivashko for her dinner, while she went to invite some of her fellow-witches to make merry!

Alenka obeyed, and when the stove was heated she turned to Ivashko, and said,—

“Get on to this stove, so that I may push you in!”

“Alas!” answered the cunning boy, “I was born stupid, and know nothing, not even how to get into a stove; but if you will but show me, I daresay I shall be able to manage it then.”

“All right!” replied the girl, as she jumped on to the stove.

Ivashko quickly pushed her in, and closed the stove door, letting the unfortunate girl bake in his stead! He then ran out, locking the door behind him, and climbed up an old tree that spread its leafy branches over the little hut.

Very soon Ivashko saw the witch march up to her little dwelling, accompanied by her friends, but, finding the door locked, the hag grumbled, and climbed in at the window, saying,—

“That bad girl has gone out for a walk and locked the door; but no matter, as long as she has cooked the boy I don’t care, for I am hungry.”

She then opened the door, and asked her guests to walk in. They all sat down and began eating away like so many hungry wolves, who had not had any food for ages!

When they had eaten everything up, so that nothing but the bones remained, they took these and threw them about under the old tree—where Ivashko sat—and began rolling about on them, as was the custom with the witches in those good old days, and then they sang,—

"We shall roll, and we shall play, with the boy Ivashko's bones!"

When Ivashko heard this he was greatly amused, and said, in a very low tone of voice,—

"You are rolling, you are playing, with the girl Alenka's bones!"

"I heard something very strange!" said one of the witches.

"Oh, no, it was nothing but the leaves of the tree!" returned the hostess.

And they chanted as before,—

"We shall roll, and we shall play, with the boy Ivashko's bones!"

Still Ivashko continued,—

"You are rolling, you are playing, with the girl Alenka's bones!"

This time all the witches heard the voice, and on looking up to the tree our friend the hag saw Ivashko sitting laughing at her, as though he enjoyed the joke! The witch, greatly enraged, flew to the tree and began biting it; but she soon broke her front teeth in doing so! However, she was not to be "done." She ran to the blacksmith, and ordered a set of iron teeth! After this she flew once more to the tree, and began to bite at it, and very soon down came the tree; but without Ivashko, for the clever boy had jumped to another, thicker than the first. On seeing this, the angry witch flew to bite that also; but the trunk was so thick that she actually broke her iron teeth over it! Away she ran to the blacksmith once more, and cried,—

“Blacksmith! blacksmith! make me another set of iron teeth, or you are a dead man!”

The smith soon got them ready, and the witch began biting the tree.

Ivashko was now at a loss what to do, when suddenly he beheld some black swans flying towards him, so he called out to them,—

“Swans of the air,  
Lift me with care,  
And carry me home  
O'er the water's foam!”

But the swans replied,—

“Let the next set take the boy!”

And tossing up their proud heads, they flew haughtily away.

Soon the next set came flying: they were of a beautiful grey colour. When Ivashko saw them, he called out again,—

“Swans of the air,  
Lift me with care,  
And carry me home  
O'er the water's foam!”

But these were as haughty as the first, and answered,—

“Let the other set take the boy!”

Soon a set of beautiful white swans came in sight, and Ivashko cried out to them,—

“Swans of the air,  
Lift me with care,  
And carry me home  
O'er the water's foam!”

These, however, consented; they made him sit on



their wings, and away they went, leaving the witch to storm and rage, and break her teeth as much as she pleased!

Away went the swans over the water, until they reached Ivashko's home. They put him down very carefully on the roof, and flew away.

Early next morning Ivashko's mother set to work baking cakes, and while doing so she said sadly to her husband,—

"Would that I knew whither our darling boy has gone! I wish I could but see him in my dreams!"

"Well, I saw him in my dream last night," answered her husband; "it seemed as though some handsome white swans brought him back to us!"

The old woman sighed, and after she had baked the cakes she began to divide them between herself and her husband, saying,—

"Well, old man—this is for you—this is for me—this is for you—and this for me!"

"And what is for me?" asked Ivashko, speaking down the chimney; for he had heard everything that had been said. "You say, 'This is for you, and this for me,' but you have quite forgotten *me!*"

"Good heavens!" cried the woman to her husband; "go you, and see who it is that is up on the roof!"

The man climbed up the wooden ladder leading to the roof, opened the trap door, and very soon came down again with Ivashko!

The mother gave a cry of delight, and in another moment she and her little son were locked in a warm embrace. Ivashko then told his parents all that had happened to him since last he saw them.

Great was the merriment of the peasants, who shortly after gave a feast, and Ivashko's health was drunk, and in fact everything went off properly.

The peasants lived very happily ever after with their little boy, and were troubled no more by his disappearance, and so ends the story of *Ivashko and the Witch*.

## PRINCE KID-SKIN.

ONCE upon a time, there lived a king and queen who had two children, a son and a daughter ; the prince was named Oleg, and the princess Olga.

But the king and queen soon died, leaving the children to wander about homeless and unprovided for in the wide, wide world.

They walked on and on, till they came to a pond where some cows were drinking.

"I am so thirsty," said Prince Oleg, "that I think I shall go and have a drink."

"No, brother, don't ; or you will turn into a calf," replied the princess.

He obeyed, and they went on farther until they came to a river, where a number of horses were running about.

"I really *must* have a drink here," said Oleg.

"No, brother dear, don't ; or you will turn into a pony."

Oleg again obeyed his sister, and they continued their journey ; till at last they came to a lake where they saw a number of goats.

"It is no use, sister, I really must have a drink now, or die."

"Don't, please don't, Oleg, or you will turn into a kid."

But this time Oleg would not listen to his sister, so he went and drank some of the water and was immediately turned into a kid, and began to jump and skip before his sister, screaming, "Me-ke-ke! Mekeke! Mekeke!" all the time.

Princess Olga cried bitterly. She tied a silk ribbon round his neck, and for some time led him along with her; but the little kid soon loosened himself, and began jumping and frisking about till he came into a garden, which belonged to the young king of that kingdom.

The servants, when they saw the princess and the kid, went to the king and said,—

"There is a little kid in your garden, your majesty, and by its side is a beautiful damsel."

The king was much interested, and ordered his courtiers and servants to go and ask the young girl who she was and what she wanted?

The courtiers went up to her and did as the king had commanded them.

"I am the daughter of the late king and queen of the next kingdom to this," said Olga in reply to their inquiries. "They left me and this little kid, my brother, alone and unprovided for. We have been wandering about everywhere, until my brother became very thirsty and drank some water in a lake where a great many goats were feeding, and so he was changed into a little kid. That is the whole of my story; go and tell it to the king, your master."

After the people had submitted all this to the young king, he at once ordered them to bring this beautiful princess and the little kid, her brother, before him.

When Princess Olga entered the hall in which the king sat, he was so struck with her beauty that he fell immediately in love with her, and, after she had told him more about herself and brother, he asked her to become his wife.

Princess Olga did not object, for the king was young and handsome, and she married him.

They lived happily for a long time. The little kid, of course, was with them. He went out every day for a walk in the garden, and ate and drank at table with the king and queen.

At last the hunting season arrived, and the king went off with his huntsmen. Hardly had he left the palace when an old witch made her appearance and bewitched the young queen, who became seriously ill. She turned very thin and pale. Everything was very quiet while she was laid up. The palace looked very gloomy, the flowers began to fade, and the trees and grass were all dried up.

When the king returned, he was very much cut up at the news, and went at once to see his wife.

“What is the matter?” he asked.

“I am not very well,” replied Olga; “but I daresay I shall be all right soon.”

The king again went out hunting, while Olga lay on her bed very ill indeed. The witch again came to her, and said,—

“If you want to become well again, Queen Olga, you must go to that lake yonder and drink some of the water there.”

Olga thanked the witch, and went in the twilight to the shore of the lake.

Now this horrid witch was watching behind a tree, and, when the young queen knelt down to drink, the hag rushed at her, seized her, tied a heavy stone round her neck, and pushed her into the water. Olga sank to the bottom, while the witch assumed the appearance of the beautiful young queen and went to the palace. When the king came home, he was delighted to see what he supposed was his wife, well and beautiful as ever.

When they sat down to dinner, the king noticed that the kid was not present at table.

"Where is the little kid?" asked the king.

"Oh, we don't want him," replied the witch. "I have forbidden him to be let in."

The next day, when the king had gone off to the hunt, the witch seized the kid, and began to beat it, saying,—

"When the king returns, I shall ask him to have you killed."

And she kept her promise. The moment the king came home, she begged him to have the kid killed. He was greatly surprised, and could not make out what had so suddenly come over his usually gentle wife; but the witch begged so hard that he could not refuse her, and agreed.

As soon as the kid saw the people grinding and sharpening the large knives, he began to cry, and ran to the king and asked him to let him go to the shore of the lake to have a drink. The king consented, and the kid ran off to the lake, and cried out,—

"Olga! sister dear, awake!

Swim to the surface of the lake.

To roast me, fires burn and glow.  
To boil me, kettles seethe below.  
And to take thy brother's life  
Glitters many a threatening knife."

But Olga only replied,—

"O! my brother, Oleg dear!  
The stones will hold me down, I fear.  
Round my feet the long grass clings;  
And my heart the serpent stings."

The little kid began to cry again and went back to the palace; but at midday he went once more to the king, and asked him whether he might again go to the lake for a drink. The king consented.

Away went the little kid, and cried out as before,—

"Olga! sister dear, awake!  
Swim to the surface of the lake.  
To roast me, fires burn and glow.  
To boil me, kettles seethe below.  
And to take thy brother's life  
Glitters many a threatening knife."

Still Olga only answered,—

"O! my brother, Oleg dear!  
The stones will hold me down, I fear.  
Round my feet the long grass clings;  
And my heart the serpent stings."

The kid wept, and went home.

Meanwhile the young king began wondering why the little kid went so often to the lake for a drink. So when the kid asked the king once more whether he might go to the lake, he determined to follow and see what the kid did.

When the kid got to the shore, the king heard him call out,—

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“Olga ! sister dear, awake !  
Swim to the surface of the lake.  
To roast me, fires burn and glow.  
To boil me, kettles seethe below.  
And to take thy brother's life  
Glitters many a threatening knife.”

But Olga only replied,—

“O ! my brother, Oleg dear !  
The stones will hold me down, I fear.  
Round my feet the long grass clings ;  
And my heart the serpent stings.”

The little kid called out again, and begged his sister to try to show herself to him, if only for a moment. He waited a little, and this time Olga swam up to the surface, smiled at her brother, and was just about to sink again, when the king rushed forward, sprang into the water, caught her in his arms, and, tearing off the stone from her neck, brought her safely to land again.

Olga told him the whole story. The king was very furious and ordered the witch to be killed and boiled instead of the kid, who, by-the-by, was afterwards changed into his proper form, and became king in his father's kingdom, while the young king and queen lived happily ever after.



## WANT.

THERE once lived two brothers, who dwelt in two different parts of the kingdom.

One was very rich, while the other was miserably poor.

One day the rich brother was preparing a great feast in his house, and the poor brother, hearing this, went to him, and said,—

“You are having a feast to-day, brother, I hear. I wish you would give me a drop of wine to drink your health with.”

“Wine!” returned the other scornfully. “There, in that tub yonder, you will find plenty; you may drink to your heart’s content.”

The poor brother went, but when he came to the tub he found that it was full of water. However, as he was a very goodnatured fellow, he drank a little water and returned home singing. Suddenly he heard some one accompanying him in his song.

“Who is it that is singing?” he asked.

“It is I!” said a voice.

“But who in the name of wonder are *you*?”

“It is I. Want is my name.”

“Where are you, and where are you off to?”

“I am with you, and am going wherever you go.”

“With *me*! how do you mean?”

"I am always with you."

"But I am a poor man. When I come home, I shall make myself a coffin and die; so you had better find somebody else."

"No; if you die, I shall die also."

The poor brother thought this very extraordinary; so as soon as he came home he set to work and made himself a coffin, thinking all the time that if he buried Want he might become rich. So when the coffin was quite ready, he said,—

"Want! I say, Want! get into the coffin, for I am about to die, and you said you would die with me."

He waited a little, and then asked,—

"Want, are you in?"

"Yes, I am," replied Want.

So the poor fellow took the coffin to the cemetery and buried it. From that time he grew to be a rich man.

When his brother got to hear of this, he came to him, and asked,—

"How came you to be so rich all at once, brother?"

The other told him the whole story. How he had made the coffin and got Want to get into it, and also how he had buried him in the cemetery.

His brother, full of envy, went to the burial-ground, dug up the coffin, and called out,—

"Want, Want! are you there?"

"Y—e—s, near—ly de—ad," piped out Want.

"Come with me then, to my brother," said he. "He is now a rich man, maybe he will do something for you."

But Want replied,—

“No, I would rather go with you; for if your brother were to see me he would surely kill me.”

The rich brother felt very uncomfortable, as he had no wish to have Want for his companion; but, as he could not get rid of him, he was obliged to take him and make the best of it. But from that day he became very poor, while the other grew richer and richer, and lived happily ever after.

## AN ANGRY WIFE. ✓

THERE was once an angry wife, who—as my young readers may well suppose—lived unhappily with her husband. She never obeyed him, and always did exactly what he told her not to do. She made him get up early to bake the cakes and do all the cooking, while she slept three times as long as was good for her!

One day, when her husband was busy baking cakes, she cried out,—

“You must not eat any of those cakes, for you don’t deserve to have them!”

“In that case, I don’t see why I should bake them,” was his reply; “come and do them yourself.”

But the angry wife was by no means anxious to give herself the trouble, so she replied quickly that he could have fifty, on condition that he would eat them up at once, without stopping. However, the old man did not quite see why he should make himself ill to please his wife; so having a will of his own he left the cakes to look after themselves, and went for a stroll in the forest, and gathered some strawberries for his lunch; anything was better than eating at home with his angry wife!

As he walked about thinking how he could get rid of his wife, he came upon a pit covered over with strawberry leaves. He stopped in front of it, and said to himself,—

“Because I live with so bad-tempered a wife my whole life is a misery. I can stand it no longer, but will try by some means or other to shut her up in this pit ; it will teach her to behave better in future.”

So he returned home, and told his wife,—

“Don’t go into the forest for strawberries.”

“I certainly shall, if I choose.”

“Well, you had better not, for I have found a place where there are some beautiful large strawberries, but under them is a pit.”

“I shall go at once and pick the strawberries off that very spot, and shan’t give you one of them. There, now! take me and show me the place this moment, come!”

Off they both went to the forest ; the man showed the place to his wife and asked her again not to go near it, knowing all the time that the harder he begged, the more certain she was to go. When the angry wife beheld all the delicious strawberries round the pit, she jumped for joy, and rushing in among the leaves over the pit she went to the bottom.

The old man, when he saw that his wife was safely disposed of, for the present at least, went home, and for some time lived in peace and harmony with himself. One day it struck him that he might go and look his wife up in the pit, and ask her how she liked her new home, and whether it agreed with her better, adding that if she had improved in her temper he would draw her up again by a rope.

When he got to the pit he began calling to his wife, but receiving no answer, he thought he would

let down the rope ; he did so, and soon began pulling it up again, but what was his astonishment and horror, when he saw, instead of his wife, a little demon holding on to the end of the rope. The man was just about to let the rope drop down again, when the demon said, in a very weak little voice,—

“ Good man, have pity on me, I am only a poor innocent little devil, and will not harm you ; take me out of this dreadful pit, and let me run about the wide world, and I will certainly reward you and make you a rich man ; but to stay in this pit is death to me now, for an angry wife came down to us and ate up all my companions, I alone escaped, thank goodness, though as it is I am only half-alive ! ”

The man was sorry for the poor little demon, for he knew what kind of a woman his wife was, having had a big dose of her himself. So he drew the little creature up.

“ Well, good man ! ” said the devil, “ now I shall keep my promise, and make your fortune for you. Come with me into the town, and when I go into people, you play at being a great doctor and drive me out ! ”

The man agreed to this proposal, and away they went ; the demon, running on in front, began tormenting men, women, and children, while the man cast him out with great success. So that in a very short time he was received with open arms by everybody, rich and poor, small and great, and became a very rich man.

At last the demon came to him, and said,—

"I have been to every house in the kingdom, and have possessed every one, while you have cast me out and got handsomely paid for doing so ; now I intend to torment the king's daughter, but mind, don't you come near the palace, even if you are called for ; don't try and heal the young princess, or—beware !"

The man promised to obey, and the little devil went to the palace and began tormenting the king's daughter. The princess was in despair. She cried, she tore her beautiful hair, and allowed no one to come near her. At last the king, who had heard of the wonderful man who was able to cast out evil spirits, ordered his servants to bring our friend before him. At first, the man would not come, but the king got so furious that the man was at last obliged to go to the palace.

"Cure my daughter," cried the king, "or off goes your head !"

This was rather too much. What was our unfortunate friend to do ? He feared the demon, and he feared the king. Suddenly an idea struck him, and he told all the courtiers, all the servants, and all the people in the streets, to run about and call out in a loud voice, "Away ! away ! the angry wife is coming ! The angry wife is coming !" while he himself went into the princess's chamber.

"What, you here after all !" exclaimed the little demon, when he saw the man enter, "wait till I get you alone, my friend ! What did I tell you only the other day ? I suppose you have forgotten. Well, I shall soon make you remember ! Just you wait a moment !"

The man, who felt far from comfortable, tried hard not to appear frightened, and said laughingly,—

“Not so fast, my young friend. I have only come here to warn you. It seems that as no one else would cast you out, the king has sent for the angry wife, and she is coming to eat you up! Listen! do you hear the people? She has evidently arrived; fly for your life, my friend!”

The moment the little demon heard these words, he sprang out of the princess, and ran to the window, where he was greatly alarmed at seeing all the people running about, crying out,—

“Away! away! The angry wife is coming! The angry wife is coming! Run for your lives!” and so on.

The demon stood looking with his eyes very wide open, and his tail up in the air, like a devil out of his senses. At last he turned to the man and asked,—

“Good man, my dear good friend, tell me, oh tell me, what on earth I am to do, and where I am to go and hide myself!”

“Go,” said our cunning friend, “to the pit where you were born, for if my angry wife has once got out, she will be in no particular hurry to get in again; so take my advice and go down.”

The little devil did not wait to be told twice; but after thanking the man for his good advice, and his apparent great friendship for him, and also after telling him hurriedly that if ever he came to the pit himself, he would always be sure to find a warm welcome,—the little devil ran as hard as his legs would carry him straight to the forest, and, throwing himself into the pit, was heard of no more.



The princess at once recovered her health, and was herself again ; while our friend the man was handsomely rewarded, and spent the rest of his life in the palace near the king, his master, with whom he became a great favourite.

As for the angry wife, she never made her appearance in this world again.

## THE LUCKY CHILD.

ONCE upon a time there lived a rich merchant, with his wife. They were good, as well as kind, people, but though they were a happy couple, there was one thing that grieved them sorely—but which some people might have thought was a great blessing,—they had no children. They prayed and prayed night and day for a child to brighten them as they grew older; but no; they fed, clothed, and took care of beggar children, and helped all the poor people around them, and were always ready to do good; but all this did not bring them any children. However, all these little good deeds and kindness made them very popular in the country in which they dwelt, and people loved them and respected them.

But one day the merchant set to work to build a very large, large bridge across a dark broad river, near which he lived. Now this river was so very broad that no person had yet been able to cross over to the other side, for the waves were so large and angry that the people were afraid of being drowned; one or two had ventured in big ships, but these even had been overturned, so great and powerful was that river. Great then was the wonder and astonishment when the good merchant began building a bridge over this dreadful river, and greater still was the love and respect he won from everybody.

When at last this tremendous bridge was finished, the merchant sent one of his clerks, Theodore by name, and told him to go on to the bridge and listen to what people said and thought about it.

Theodore obeyed, and hid himself on the bridge, presently he saw three holy men coming along ; he listened, and heard one say,—

“This is indeed a wonderful thing, this bridge ; the good merchant is always thinking how he can please everybody ; but we, alas ! never think how we can best please him ; we really ought to reward him in some way.”

“How can we, brother ?” said another ; “he is the richest man in the kingdom, he does not want anything.”

“Yes, brother,” said the third, “he *does* want something ; he wants a child.”

“True !” said the first, “that is his greatest wish, how stupid of me not to think of that before ! We shall reward him with a child, and a lucky child.”

Theodore went home and told his master what he had heard. And that very year a beautiful boy was sent.

But Theodore, the clerk, jealous of his master's luck, began thinking what he had best do to revenge himself on the good merchant. He waited until night, then he took a dove, killed it, and sprinkling the blood on the child's bed and on the hands of its mother, took the child, and paid an old woman to take care of it.

When morning dawned the merchant missed the

child ; he asked all his servants whether any of them had seen the boy ; but no, they none of them had set eyes on him. At last the merchant asked Theodore whether he had seen him.

“No,” said the wicked clerk ; “but why do you ask everybody whether they have seen the child ? Look properly at the child’s little bed ; see, it is all covered with blood, and so are your wife’s hands, though she is sleeping peacefully ; it is she who killed your boy, there is no doubt of that.”

The merchant looked and saw that what his clerk had said was true, and therefore thought that his wife had certainly killed the boy. He at once ordered the poor woman to be locked up in prison, while he mourned over the loss of his child.

Years passed on, and the boy became a strong, healthy, beautiful child, and was able to run about and talk about everything. He also possessed the great power of wishing, and of doing things that none but fairies and such like could do. All this time the child had no idea that he was the son of the rich merchant, whom everybody praised so highly, but lived happily with the old woman to whom Theodore had given him to be taken care of.

Theodore had left the merchant, and was now living by himself, and thanks to the Lucky Child, had all he required, and all his wishes attended to.

One day Theodore took the boy and went with him to the river-side, near to the bridge which the merchant had built, and said to him,—

“Let the other side of the water be a new kingdom, and let by the side of this bridge a crystal one appear,

so that when the king sees it, he might give me his daughter to be my wife."

The boy wished it all to be so, and immediately a beautiful crystal bridge stood before them, and on the other side a splendid kingdom sprang up, with a palace of gold, and marble churches and walls

When the king woke up on the following morning, and saw these wonderful things, he asked who it was that made them, and was told that Theodore was the maker.

"Well," said the king, "if he is such a clever man as all that, he can have my daughter for his wife, as a reward."

Theodore married the princess, and became king over the new kingdom, and took the Lucky Child to live with him in the palace. But Theodore was not kind to the boy, he beat him and gave him very little to eat, making him do all kinds of hard work for him, and ordering him to obey his wishes, so that the boy's life at the palace was by no means pleasant. Still he bore everything very patiently, as he liked Theodore, and was very fond of the princess.

One evening Theodore and his wife were talking to each other, while the boy sat unnoticed in a corner weeping. Suddenly the princess turned to her husband, and asked,—

"How was it that you became so rich? I hear that you were once only a poor clerk, in the good merchant's office."

"Well, my riches and my supposed cleverness are

not my own, they all belong to that little boy, who lives with us."

"How so? I do not understand you."

"Well, I shall tell you the whole story, on condition that you tell no one."

And after the princess had promised not to say a word to any one, Theodore told her the story of his sins and his unkindness to the little boy.

"I became jealous of the merchant," he began, "and when the child was sent to him, I determined to be revenged on him somehow; so I took this child, whom both the parents loved dearly, and paid a woman to take care of it, while I put all the blame on the mother, whom the merchant straightway sent to prison, thinking that she had killed him. I then kept the child for myself, for he was useful to me; if ever I wished for anything I told him, and I got what I wanted."

The princess was so horrified that she did not know what to do or say, but the child, when he heard what Theodore had said, sprang forward, boiling with rage, and cried out wrathfully,—

"Let this wretched man be changed into a dog!"

And in another moment Theodore was no more, but a horrid, half-starved dog stood in his place.

The boy tied an iron chain round the dog's neck, and started off to the merchant's house.

"My good man," he said, when he came to his father, "give me a red-hot coal."

"What for, young man?" asked the father.

"My dog is rather hungry, and I want to feed him."

“Good heavens ! but where on earth did any one hear of a Christian feeding his dog on coals ?”

“And where, please tell me—where was it ever known that a Christian mother killed her child ?”

“What do you mean, young man ?”

“This—that I am your lost child, and that this dog is your old clerk Theodore, who told all those lies about my mother.”

And the boy told his father all that he had heard Theodore tell his wife. The merchant was delighted to have his son back, and at once ordered his wife to be set free again. They then all three moved to the golden palace, on the other side of the river, where they lived in happiness ever after, while the princess went back to her father.

As for the dog Theodore, he remained a dog until his death, which fortunately took place very soon ; whether it was from the hot coal, or something else, I cannot say, all I know is, that he departed this life.

The little boy became a great man, and was a lucky one all his life.

## THE POTTER AND THE EVIL SPIRIT.

COMING along a high road one day, a certain Potter met a man, who, stopping him, said,—

“Take me to your place as a workman.”

‘But do you understand pottery?’ asked the Potter.

“Oh, yes, master, nobody better ; just you try.”

“Come along, then !”

And they shook hands with each other and went home.

“Well, give me forty loads of clay,” said the man, when he arrived, “and to-morrow I shall set to work.”

The Potter got all the things he wanted, and gave them to him.

“I shall only work at night, master,” said the man ; “but take care and don’t come near me in the workroom.”

“Why not ?”

“Because if you do, bad luck will befall you.”

Now this man was no other than an evil spirit, and when it was about midnight, he went down into the workroom and called out something in a loud voice, suddenly in came tumbling a number of little devils, who immediately set to work, hammering away like thunder, making pots. The noise was so great that it sounded all through the house and in the streets.

The Potter could stand it no longer.



“I shall go and see what all that row is about!”

The Potter went down to the workshop and looked through the key-hole in the door; and there, to his surprise, he saw the little demons hard at work, with the exception of one, who was lame, and limped about doing nothing but looking round him. All at once he noticed the Potter looking through the key-hole, so he took up a handful of clay and threw it through the key-hole, right into the Potter's eye, so that the unfortunate man became blind of one eye, and ran upstairs to his room in a great rage.

Next morning the Evil Spirit came to the Potter, and said,—

“Go, master, and see how many pots I have made in one night!”

The Potter went down and counted one hundred and forty pots standing all in a row.

“Now, master,” said the Evil Spirit, “I want you to get me a thousand fathoms of wood, for I intend to bake the pots to-night.”

When he had got what he asked for, the Evil Spirit shut himself up at midnight in the workroom, and called for the little demons again, who came in jumping and dancing, and after breaking all the pots they threw them into the fire and burnt them.

When the Potter saw all this through the key-hole, he thought to himself,—

“This man will be the ruin of me. I shall lose all I have in the way of work.”

In the morning the Evil Spirit called his master, and said,—

“Look here, master, have I not done my work well?”

The Potter looked round him, and much to his surprise beheld one hundred and forty pots, each better than the other!

At midnight the Evil Spirit called the demons once more, and they set to work and began painting the pots very beautifully, and then put them all in a cart.

When market-day came round, the Potter took the pots to market, while the Evil Spirits ran about all over the place and made everybody buy the pots. All the people flew out of their houses and crowded round the cart, each eager to have the best pot.

The Potter returned home with not a single pot in his cart, but with his pockets full of money.

"Well," said the Evil Spirit, "let us halve the money between us, master."

This was done, and the Evil Spirit departed.

In about a week's time the Potter went once more to market with some pots of his own make; but, alas! no one came to buy any more of him; he stood and stood, and called out, but all in vain, not a soul came near him, some passed him by hurriedly, exclaiming,—

"We know your pots, you old cheat! They are pretty enough to look at, but when they come to be *used*, they break! We know your tricks, old man; no more of your pots for us!"

Time went on, still no one bought his pots; at last the unfortunate man became very poor, and through his trouble took to drink; he turned his house and workshop into a public-house, and tried to earn his

money in that way, but I don't know whether he succeeded ; let us hope, however, that if he is alive now he is better off, and does not let himself be cheated by the Evil Spirit any more.

## PRINCESS GREY-GOOSE.

IN a certain kingdom there lived a king and queen, who had two children, a boy and a girl, Prince Demitrius and Princess Marie.

When the princess was quite a little child none of her nurses could ever make her sleep. She would always lie in bed awake all the night long and stare in front of her. At last the young prince thought he might be able to sing his little sister to sleep, so sat down beside her as she was lying in bed, and sang,—

“Go to sleep, little sister dear ; when you grow up I shall give you in marriage to my best of friends, Prince Ignatius, of the kingdom near the World’s End.”

And the little princess went to sleep immediately. When the prince saw that he was successful in sending her into the land of dreams, he continued the prescription, and always with success.

Years passed ; the prince and princess became tall and handsome, nay, beautiful. Prince Demitrius went to stay three or four months with his great friend, Prince Ignatius, the handsome son and heir of the king of a kingdom near the World’s End. The two princes were passionately fond of each other, and were never happier than when together. They went

about riding, rowing, hunting, and, in fact, did everything they possibly could to enjoy themselves. Though Prince Demitrius had often visited and stayed with his friend, Prince Ignatius had never once been able to return the visits.

On one occasion, however, when Prince Demitrius was leaving the glorious kingdom at the World's End, he made his friend promise to come and stay at his father's court some day, and have some fun.

"All right, old fellow," said Prince Ignatius. "I will try my best to come this time."

And so the two friends parted.

Now Prince Demitrius had, at the foot of his sofa in his own particular room, a large and handsome portrait of his wonderfully beautiful sister: he would often lie on this sofa and gaze with admiration at the sweet face before him, and think that there was no girl like her in the whole world,—and he was right, a more perfect creature was never seen.

One day, the prince, tired out with hunting, threw himself down on his sofa to rest, and allowed his eyes to feast as usual on his sister's portrait until he fell into a peaceful slumber.

Suddenly, who should walk into the room but Prince Ignatius; he had arrived quite unexpectedly at court to stay with his friend for a few days, and after asking the footmen where the prince was, had walked into the chamber in order to astonish his friend, and was rather surprised to find that noble personage asleep! However, not wishing to wake him, he began to amuse himself by looking at the various little things in the room, when all at once his eyes fell on

the lovely portrait ;—he stood transfixed with admiration. He forgot for the moment where he was, who he was, and everything else, knowing only that he had fallen desperately in love with that beautiful face. He had never seen his friend's sister in his life, but had only heard of her ; so when he saw this picture he did not know that it was hers, but thought it must be Prince Demetrius' bride ; feeling angry and jealous he rushed up to the sofa and drew his sword, intending to kill the young prince ; but fortunately just at that very moment Prince Demetrius woke, and on seeing his friend standing over him with his drawn sword, he sprang up, exclaiming,—

“ *You* here, Ignatius, and what in the name of all that is wonderful are you going to do ? ”

“ To kill you ! ”

“ Kill *me* ! My dear friend, what for ? ”

“ Because, Demetrius, that portrait is that of your bride, and I felt jealous of you, for I have fallen in love with that face.”

“ No ; it is a portrait of Princess Marie, my much beloved sister.”

“ But why, my friend, did you never tell me more about her, and of her great beauty ? I feel as though I could not live without her now.”

“ Well, marry her, Ignatius, and then we shall be brothers.”

“ Where is she ? Let me see her at once ! ”

“ She is away from home, staying with the princess at the kingdom opposite the World's End, but the moment she returns, I will tell her that you wish to marry her.”

Prince Ignatius threw his arms round his friend's neck and embraced him. When his stay had come to an end, Prince Ignatius returned home. He set to work to make arrangements for the wedding.

When Princess Marie came home from her stay at the kingdom opposite the World's End, she was delighted to hear that the handsome Prince Ignatius, her brother's best friend, wished to marry her, and that she was, so to speak, engaged to a prince whom she had never seen!

Everything was got ready, and the beautiful young bride was soon sailing away in a handsome ship to the kingdom near the World's End, with her old nurse and her ugly daughter; while Prince Demetrius sailed in front with his men in another ship.

When the ship in which the princess was had left the shore on which it was built far behind, and was surrounded on all sides by the dark blue sea, the nurse came up to the princess, and said,—

“Fair princess, you look tired, go take off your costly garments and go to sleep, so as to look fresh and bright by the time we reach the kingdom of your future husband.”

Princess Marie obeyed, and was soon fast asleep. Now the nurse was a very wicked old witch, and thought that if she could get rid of the princess somehow, she would be able to dress up her own daughter in the princess's garments, and give her to Prince Ignatius for a wife. As it happened to be getting towards night and the young bride was still asleep, the bad nurse went gently to the bedside, and touched the fair sleeper with a little stick, and changed her

into a grey-goose, which flew from the ship on to the dark blue sea ; while the horrid nurse took the beautiful garments and dressed her daughter up in them.

When they at last arrived at the kingdom near the World's End, Prince Ignatius was standing waiting on the shore with all his men ready to receive them ; Prince Demitrius had already landed, and was looking forward just as much as his friend to seeing his sister.

At last the nurse landed with the supposed princess, who had very carefully drawn a thick veil over her ugly face ; but Prince Ignatius ordered her to throw it off, and then, looking from a little miniature of Princess Marie, which he held in his hand, to the nurse's ugly daughter, he flew into a dreadful rage, declaring that it was a trick of his friend, Prince Demitrius, and that the miniature was that of his bride, as he had said from the beginning. So he ordered the unfortunate young prince to be locked up in prison, and that no one was to go near him ; as for the nurse and her daughter, he ordered them to be locked up also.

When midnight came, and the moon shed her silvery rays upon the dark blue sea, there came out of the midst of the waters the grey-goose, who flew to the prison where Prince Demitrius sat, and hung her feathers upon a nail on the window and resuming her proper shape once more, came up to her brother, saying,—

“Dearest of brothers ! My poor Demitrius ! How dreadful it must be for you to be shut up in this wretched prison with nothing but bread and water,



it is my wicked nurse who is to blame, she changed me into a grey-goose, and dressed her daughter up in my wedding clothes."

The brother and sister burst into tears and bemoaned their hard fate; but when morning dawned the princess again put on her feathers and became a grey-goose once more, and flew away to sea. This went on for some time, till at last one night a soldier saw all that passed between the brother and sister, and how the princess changed herself into a grey-goose and flew away; so he went and told his master, Prince Ignatius, all he had heard and seen. The prince was greatly astonished, and ordered that when the grey-goose again made her appearance, he should be told of it.

Midnight came, and with it Princess Marie; she hung her feathers on the nail by the window and ran to her brother. The guards at once told their prince, who ordered the feathers to be burnt immediately, and then putting his ear to the key-hole of the prison-door, heard the princess say,—

"Demitrius, dearest and best of brothers, how frightfully dull and horrid it must be for you in this dreadful place. And to think that all this misfortune has come through that horrid nurse of mine, who changed me into a grey-goose, and dressed her daughter up in my wedding garments, so that she might marry Prince Ignatius. Oh, dear! and I am heartily sick of being a goose. It is such a stupid life."

As soon as Prince Ignatius heard all this he unlocked the prison-door and rushed in. Poor Princess Marie was so frightened that she ran to the window

for her feathers, but—they were gone ; before she knew what to do, or where to go, Prince Ignatius caught her in his arms and held her tightly, while he looked with admiration at the lovely face ; but as he held her she changed suddenly into a stick and rolled down on his feet. Prince Ignatius, however, was not astonished, nor in the least “put out,” for he was well acquainted with all magic arts, and knew what to do and how to manage them. He picked up the little stick, and breaking it in three, threw the two ends behind him and the middle before him, saying,—

“Before me appear the most beautiful of maidens, the charming Princess Marie, and behind me a thick oak-tree.”

And so it was ; behind him stood the oak-tree and before him appeared the lovely princess, once more in all her great beauty. After this Prince Ignatius begged his friend's pardon, and was gladly forgiven ; they then all three of them went to the palace, where Prince Ignatius gave orders for a grand feast on the following day, and also arrangements for his marriage with Princess Marie, which was to take place at the same time.

The wedding was very grand indeed ; all the kings and queens of the kingdoms round about the World's End were invited to it, and they all made merry. Prince Demitrius was best man. Everything went off splendidly, and the people enjoyed themselves immensely, with the exception of the wicked nurse and her daughter, who were sent to a place where they remained for the rest of their lives and were heard of no more.

### THE GREY WOLF AND THE GOLDEN CASSOWARY.

LONG before you and I were born there lived a king whose name was Dymion. He reigned with great wisdom, and had three sons, who were named respectively Clement, Peter, and John!

Now this king had a beautiful garden, and in this garden there was a wonderful apple-tree, on which golden apples grew. All at once there appeared to be a deficiency among the royal apples, and King Dymion became very sorrowful and very thin, lost his appetite, and fell altogether into a bad way.

At last he called his sons to him, and said,—

“My dear children, I want you to do me a great service, a robber comes to our royal garden every night and many of the golden apples are gone. To me this loss is as bad as death. Now, to him who catches the night robber I will give half my kingdom, and when I die he shall inherit the rest.”

The sons listened to what their father said, talked it over, and agreed that they would try not to sleep at night, but look out for the robber.

That night Prince Clement, the eldest of the three, went into the garden, lay down on the grass, and of course fell asleep, in fact he slept so soundly that it was midday before he woke. He then got up, went

to the king and told him that the robber had not been. But another apple was missing!

The next night Prince Peter went, sat down under the apple-tree, and likewise found himself in dream-land. When noon came he went to his father, saying that the robber was not to be seen. Yet another apple was gone!

On the third night Prince John went into the garden and sat under the apple-tree watching for the robber. He looked all round him, and took care to keep wide awake. When midnight came he saw the garden begin to shine as if with lightning. Rapidly from the east came flying a golden cassowary like a fiery star burning in the heavens, making the night as clear as day.

Prince John crept nearer and nearer to the apple-tree, he hardly dared to breathe, but waited to see what would happen next.

The golden cassowary alighted upon the apple-tree, and began its work plucking off the apples.

Prince John got up gently from the grass and seized the cassowary by the tail, but the bird would not be caught so easily; it dropped the apples on the ground, tore itself out of the prince's hands, and flew away, only leaving one of its feathers behind, and, when the prince held it up, the whole garden shone like fire.

As soon it was day the prince went to the king, his father, telling him that the robber had been discovered at last, and that it was a bird and not a man, as was first supposed, and to prove the truth of his story he showed the king the feather. His

father was delighted, and kissed him for joy ! And from that time forth no one stole the king's apples.

King Dymion became himself again ; he could eat, drink, and sleep as of old.

But after a time the king became disagreeable once more, and had a strong wish to possess this wonderful cassowary, so he despatched his two eldest sons in search of the extraordinary creature. When they had departed Prince John begged his father to let him go too ; but the king was loath to do so, in case some harm should befall the young prince, who was his favourite son. However, after a great deal of begging, Prince John obtained his father's consent and rode off.

He rode and rode until he came to a place where the road branched off into three, and in the middle stood a finger-post, on which was this inscription,—

*“ Whosoever goes straight on will be cold and hungry. He who goes to the left will live, but his horse will die. He who goes to the right will die, but his horse will live.”*

“To the left!” said the prince to himself, as he turned his horse in that direction.

He had not gone far before a grey wolf sprang out and threw himself with ferocity on the horse, and before the prince had time to save the animal the wolf had eaten it and was off.

Prince John continued his journey very sorrowfully on foot ; suddenly the same grey wolf came up to him and said,—

I am sorry, Prince John, that I ate up your good horse, but of course you saw what was written on the

finger-post? therefore it could not be avoided. Now forget your sorrow and sit down on my back; I like the look of you, and believe you to be a good man, and will serve you from this day forth. But now tell me whither I have to carry you, and why!"

Prince John explained, and told him all that had happened with respect to the apples.

"All right," said the wolf; "I know where to find the golden cassowary, so sit down on my back, prince, and let us be off!"

They were off indeed, for the grey wolf ran faster than any bird could fly.

"Here we are, prince," said he, as they stopped in front of a stone wall. "But listen to me, the cassowary is in a golden cage hanging against the wall; take the bird but leave the cage, or else you will get into trouble."

Prince John climbed over into a most beautiful garden, wonderfully illuminated as if by the sun, but as it was midnight this was hardly likely to be the case, and on looking round the prince saw that the light came from a rich golden cage, hanging on the wall at the opposite side of the garden, in which sat the cassowary asleep. He was about to take the bird out, when suddenly he thought,—

"How on earth am I to carry the cassowary?"

And forgetting what the grey wolf had said, he began to take down the golden cage. But, alas! under it many musical instruments were arranged, from which came a great sound, which woke the guards, who ran into the garden, seized Prince John, and took him before their king.

The king, who was the owner of the luminous cassowary, agreed to pardon Prince John, and to give him the wonderful bird to boot, on condition of his obtaining for him a certain horse of pure gold, belonging to King Alphonso, who ruled over a kingdom at the World's End.

Prince John promised to do so, and went to the place where he had left the grey wolf.

"You had better have listened to me," said the wolf as he came to meet him; "but you will be wiser next time. Now let us go to King Alphonso at the World's End."

When they at last arrived at King Alphonso's kingdom the grey wolf stopped at the stables where the golden horse was kept.

"Now, prince, listen to me," said the wolf; "go into the stables, you will find the grooms fast asleep, take the golden horse away gently, but on no account attempt to take away the bridle or you will again get into difficulties."

Into the royal stables went Prince John, and was just about to take the beautiful horse from its place, when, as ill-luck would have it, he saw the golden bridle, and no sooner had he taken it up than the grooms awoke, took him prisoner, and in the morning brought him before King Alphonso.

King Alphonso was also good enough to forgive the prince, and agreed to give him the golden horse if he would get him the Princess Helen, the fair daughter of King Cassimir, in exchange.

Prince John hung down his head, and after promising to do his best, went to the place where

he had left the grey-wolf, half afraid that his friend had gone. But no, the good creature was still waiting for him.

“Oh, prince!” said the wolf, “if I did not love you I should not have been here; but never mind, we have not a moment to lose, sit on my back and let us fly to King Cassimir.”

As soon as they arrived at their destination the grey wolf turned to the prince, and said,—

“Alight, my prince; not far from here is the king’s garden, I shall go myself this time while you wait for me under this green tree.”

The wolf went his way, and climbing over the garden wall, hid himself among the bushes.

Princess Helen was walking in the garden, surrounded by her maidens and nurses, and by her side walked the queen, her mother. The grey wolf noticed everything and kept his eye on her all the time. Suddenly, just as the fair princess was passing the bushes where he lay, he sprang up from behind them, and seizing the princess, threw her on to his back, and was off like the wind. A dreadful cry arose from the maidens and the nurses and the queen; in another moment the whole court came running in great alarm; ministers, grand chamberlains of the court, generals, and a great many more, who looked frightfully scared, wondering what had happened. When King Cassimir heard how a wolf had carried off his beloved daughter, he called his hunters together and let all his dogs loose; but in vain, for the grey wolf was far away with the prince and princess. The



latter lay senseless in the prince's arms, the grey wolf having sadly frightened her. At last she began to recover and moved a little, her beautiful eyes opened, and when she raised them to the prince's face she blushed like a rose,—and I am sorry to say the prince followed her example and blushed also. In that moment they fell so desperately in love with each other that it would be impossible to describe it in this story.

But after a time Prince John fell into profound silence and grief; he could not bear the thought of parting with Princess Helen and giving her to King Alphonso, neither did *she* like the idea when the prince had told her all about it.

The grey wolf, seeing their sorrow, exclaimed,—  
“Do not grieve my good friends; I will help you.”

At last they arrived at King Alphonso's palace.

“Now, prince,” cried the wolf, “here we must act with caution and tact. I shall take the form of the princess, who must remain hidden in that forest yonder, while you take me to King Alphonso and receive the golden horse in exchange; you must then mount it and ride back to the forest for the princess, and wait for me. I shall not be very long, though I intend to have a little fun. Good-bye.”

With these words the wolf struck himself three times with his tail, and was immediately changed into the likeness of Princess Helen. Prince John, greatly surprised at the sudden change, took the wolf and delivered him over into the hands of King Alphonso as Princess Helen, receiving in exchange the golden

horse, and rode off on it as swiftly as the wind into the forest where the real princess was waiting.

Meanwhile, at the palace the wedding feast was getting ready, and, according to custom, King Alphonso was about to kiss his young bride, but he had hardly bent down to do so, when the wolf gave a little jump and bit his nose off; while the king, instead of seeing his bride before him, saw, to his horror, a grey wolf.

The wolf, however, did not stand long upon ceremony, but striking his tail against the king's legs, made off through the door, while everybody began calling out as loud as ever they could,—

“Stop him! stop him! Seize him! seize him.”

But the cunning wolf had long reached the prince and princess. Prince John got on the wolf's back while Princess Helen sat on the golden horse, and away they flew through the air. At last they came to the kingdom of King Dalmat, owner of the golden cassowary.

“Now I shall change myself into the likeness of the golden horse,” said the wolf, “so that you need not part with him either. You must take me to King Dalmat and receive the cassowary in exchange.”

Princess Helen was told to go on before them with the golden horse, while the prince took the grey wolf, in the form of the golden horse, to King Dalmat who was delighted with the splendid animal, and gave the cassowary to the prince.

King Dalmat at once ordered the horse—or wolf—to be harnessed, and rode off on it to a hunt.

“How well King Dalmat rides!” cried all the huntsmen with admiration.

But all at once the shaggy wolf gave a violent bounce and was off, leaving King Dalmat with his legs up in the air and his shoulders fixed in the ground, which seemed opening to receive him.

He struggled with all his force, but in vain, to free himself by putting his hands against the ground and kicking his feet up into the air. His men ran at once to set him free, after which they began to cry out after the wolf,—

“Seize him! seize him! Catch him! catch him!”

But there was nothing to seize and nothing to catch, for, as before, Prince John was comfortably seated on the wolf's back, and the princess on the golden horse, who arched its neck in pride beneath her and danced along with her. They did not hurry, but rode slowly along the high road until at last they came to the place where the prince had first met the grey wolf. There still lay the bones of Prince John's horse. The grey wolf stopped suddenly, and after breathing a little, said,—

“Now, my dear prince, the time has come for us to part; I honour you and believe in you. You have treated me with all possible kindness, which, as long as I live, I shall always remember. And now, dear prince, I want to give you some good advice. Be careful, there are many bad people in this world, and whatever happens do not believe or trust your brothers. I will pray fervently that you may get home safely, and cheer me with good news

when next we meet. Good-bye, and may good luck attend you and Princess Helen."

With these words the grey wolf disappeared.

Four days afterwards the prince, seated on the golden horse, with the princess in front of him, and the golden cassowary in the cage over his shoulders, came to his father's kingdom, where, as ill-luck would have it, he met his elder brothers in a field. In a fit of jealousy the wretches attacked him, leaving him for dead on the ground, and rode away, taking with them the princess, the cassowary and the horse.

In the meantime, breathless, immovable, and covered with blood, on a barren heath lay Prince John. Thus passed the whole day, and already the sun was beginning to set; the heath was dreary, not a soul was to be seen, the wild carrion crows, attended by their young, came flying round the prince. At this critical moment the grey wolf suddenly made his appearance, as though he had sprung up from the earth.

He had scented danger from afar and arrived just in time to save his beloved prince; another moment and it would have been too late. He foresaw what the crows wanted to do, and permitted them to approach the body. Hardly had they flown down upon the prince when the grey wolf seized them by their tails.

"Let us go, grey wolf, let us go!" croaked the crows.

"No, my friends," replied the wolf, "I shall not let you go until your young ones bring me the water of life and the water of death."

Away flew the young ones, while the grey wolf kept the old ones engaged in conversation ; they told the wolf all about their experience of birds and people.

The wolf listened with great attention and wondered at their wisdom, still keeping firm hold of their tails all the time, and that he might not forget himself he squeezed them with his claws.

The sun went down and the night came and passed away, the sky was red again before the cunning young crows appeared with the water of life and the water of death, in little bottles. The wolf took the bottles and sent the crows upon their business ; then he went up to the breathless and motionless body of the prince and sprinkled it over with the water of death, and in a moment the hue of death passed away from his features, his cheeks became rosy. Then the wolf sprinkled him over with the water of life and he opened his eyes, shook himself, got up, looked round him, and at last, on seeing his friend the wolf standing before him, he said laughingly,—

“ I believe I have been asleep ? ”

“ Yes, my prince, and you would have slept here for *ever*,” returned the wolf, “ had I not smelt the danger you were in ; I have done you a good turn to-day, but it is the last ; from this day forth you must take care of yourself. However, I will give you some more advice. Listen : your angry brothers are no longer alive, the large, black immortal skeleton has twisted both their necks and has also sent your kingdom to sleep, your relations and subjects are wrapped in profound slumber. But besides this, the

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angry skeleton has stolen your Princess Helen, the golden cassowary, and the golden horse, and has locked them up in his castle. But do not fear for your bride, as the immortal skeleton has no power over her for she possesses a strong talisman. Still, she cannot get away from the castle, the only thing that can set her free is the dead female skeleton. Now you will have to find this deceased she-skeleton. I myself do not know where she is to be found, the only person who can tell you anything at all about her and where she is buried, is a certain witch who lives in a forest the other side of the World's End, but no one has yet dared to enter into this forest; no wild beast even has ever penetrated it, nor has any bird been known to fly over it, so dark and dreadful is this forest. The witch rides about through the clouds at full speed, sweeping past on her broom; with an iron pestle in her hand. From her alone you can learn how to get at the deceased she-skeleton for they are great friends. And now I will tell you where you can find a horse that will bring you straight to the dark wood and to the witch, for no ordinary horse will take you. Go from hence eastward until you come to a green meadow, in the middle of which stand two trees, and between them in the ground is an iron door with a ring. This door you must open and go down an iron staircase, which you will see there; you will then come to a subterranean hall with twelve doors on each side; behind the twelfth door on the right-hand side, is a big horse shut up by himself. When he hears your footsteps, he will run out to meet you; mount him

and ride off ; he will know his way, you need tell him nothing. Now good-bye, my prince ; if ever we meet again, it won't be until your wedding-day ! ”

And the grey wolf was off.

Following the wolf's advice for once, Prince John went eastward, and in three days came to the subterranean vault. He stopped before the twelfth door and immediately there was a sound like thunder, and a tremendous horse ran out. The prince mounted his back and patted him fondly on his neck, while the handsome animal snorted and neighed with pleasure, stood on his hind-legs for a moment and then bounded away till the earth beneath him shook and trembled. He sprang higher than the highest trees, over the broad valleys, and covered the narrow ones with his tail, and overcame every obstacle with his breast. He flew like an arrow without bending the smallest blade of grass with his feet and without raising the least dust from the ground. But after galloping like this all day he at last grew tired, which after all was perfectly natural. The perspiration poured down from him in streams, and he was surrounded as though by smoke, and with clouds of hot steam, so that Prince John was obliged to slacken his pace. Evening was already setting in as the prince rode through a very wide field, musing on the beautiful sunset. Suddenly he heard a savage cry, and on looking to see whence it came, he beheld two wer-wolves fighting on the road, biting, tearing, and rending each other with their claws.

Prince John rode up to them, and asked,—

“What are you two brothers fighting about ? ”

"Well," said one, "it happens that we possess three dens, an invisible cloak, a cap, and a club. Now, as we are only two, we do not know how we can best divide them between us. We began to dispute, but that does not seem to help us. Now you, who are a learned man, might perhaps be able to give us some good advice, and tell us how we had best divide these things and avoid fighting."

The prince thought for a moment, and then said,—

"I will let fly an arrow, and you must both run after it; he who first gets to the place where the arrow falls shall have which two of the dens he likes best, and also the cap, cloak, and club. Do you consent?"

"Yes, yes!" they cried, and stood side by side ready to start.

Prince John shot forth an arrow, and off went the wolves after it, leaving the cloak, cap, and club behind them. The moment Prince John was left by the wer-wolves he put on the cloak and cap, and he and his horse became at once invisible and rode away, leaving the two wolves either to become friends again or go on fighting as long as they pleased.

Early on the following morning the big horse came to the dark and dreary forest where the witch lived.

The old hag was very condescending to the prince, and told him how to get at the deceased she-skeleton.

"In the middle of the mighty ocean," said she, "in the Island of Booyan, stands an old, old oak, and under this oak is an iron box buried in the



ground ; in this box lies a fat hare, and in that hare sits a grey duck, and in that duck is an egg, and in that egg is the deceased she-skeleton herself. When you get as far as the egg you must take it and go straight to the immortal skeleton's castle. When you get there you will see a twelve-headed serpent lying at the castle gates keeping watch. Now you must not think of fighting with this serpent, that would be useless ; you have in your possession a club which will do all that for you if you tell it when to begin. You must then put on your invisible cloak and cap and go to the immortal skeleton, and throw down the egg before him ; as soon as you do that he will die. But on your way back you must not forget to take some delightful dulcimers which you will see in the garden, for if you do not take them your father, King Dymion, and his court will never wake. Now good-bye, Prince John, good luck attend you. Your good horse will find the way. If anything happens, think of me, old woman though I am, not unkindly but with good-will. God bless you !”

The prince then parted from the benevolent old lady, and mounting his horse he devoutly made the sign of the cross, whistled loudly, and off they went as before, leaving the dark forest in the distance, and the mighty ocean was reached in due time. When the prince had galloped up to it he looked about him, wondering how he and his horse could possibly cross over to the Island of Booyan through those deep and angry waves, when he beheld a fisherman's net, in which an unfortunate little pike was struggling. The pike on seeing the prince called out,—

“Prince John, be good enough to take me out of the net and throw me back into the ocean, for I may be useful to you in a short time !”

The prince, always ready to help, did so, and the pike turned round, thanked him, and then disappeared in the sea, while Prince John stood looking at the water thoughtfully. The big horse looked at him inquiringly, and wondered what was in his master's mind ; was he thinking how to get to the Island of Booyan ? or of his fair princess ?

“What are you thinking of, my prince ?” asked the horse at last. “If you are wondering how you are to get across, set your mind at rest ; nothing is easier. Mount my back again and I will be your ship, only you must hold on tight to my mane and fear nothing !”

Prince John obeyed, and the horse bounded boldly down the steep shore into the depths of the sea, and in the twinkling of an eye, horse and rider were out of sight in the depths of darkness.

Suddenly, startled by the noise of the waves, Prince John fell from his charger's back into the water, but in another moment the big horse helped his rider up and once more began to beat the water with his hoofs and breast, while all around him the waves rose and dashed with fury. How much lighter a sailing-ship looks when the wind blows it gently along the sea ! With long and quick strokes the good horse soon swam over to the Island of Booyan, where he leaped ashore, covered with foam, right in front of the oak.

Prince John had no wish to linger about so he left

the big horse by the seaside to eat the grass at its leisure, and went up to the old oak and tried to shake it, but it was very firm. Again he shook, and harder than before; this time the old tree creaked. He tried once more, harder and harder, till the roots began to move in the earth ; then the prince, exerting all his strength, pulled up the sturdy tree with one wrench, and down he fell on his back with it.

But he was up again in a moment looking round him ; the roots lay scattered about like snakes, and where the old oak used to stand there was now a large and deep hole. In this hole Prince John found the iron box ; he raised the lid and took out the hare by its ears. He had hardly torn it open when out jumped a grey duck and ran off towards the sea ; but the prince quickly shot an arrow through the animal, which fell dead on the ground ; but the egg, alas ! rolled out straight into the sea, and fell to the bottom. Prince John sighed. Suddenly the pike appeared, and on seeing the prince in distress, dived down into the water, and after two or three minutes reappeared, and swam to the shore with the egg in its mouth and put it down at the prince's feet, saying,--

“ You see now that within one hour I have been of use to you ;” and with these words the pike dived back again, before the prince had time to thank it.

He took the egg, and, mounting his horse, left the Island of Booyan and crossed the mighty ocean.

The horse galloped along till he and his rider came to a very high rock, on which stood the im-

mortal skeleton's castle ; round this castle was a wall of iron, and in the wall was a gate, before which lay a twelve-headed serpent ; six of whose heads were always asleep and six were always awake, so that no one dared to stand and look at the castle for fear of the serpent, who would eat any number of people up in a moment, and not leave a tooth to remember them by.

But the horse was careful ; he brought the prince as near the gates as he thought wise, and made him put on the invisible cloak and cap. Prince John dismounted and crept up to the serpent, and then whispered to his club,—

“ Begin ! ”

The club did not wait to be told twice, but jumped upon the serpent and began beating it as hard as it could on the heads and back. The serpent howled, but the club took no notice whatever, only beat it all the harder. At last the serpent opened one of its mouths to catch its antagonist ; but no, the club only beat the harder. Then the serpent opened all its twelve mouths and made a number of dreadful grimaces, but the club cared little or nothing for this, and only knocked all its teeth out !

The serpent writhed as if it were mad, and turned a back somersault in its wrath. It breathed fire, and gnawed the earth, but all in vain. Not hurriedly, nor hastily, striking no false blows, the club continued its work quite at its ease. At last the serpent, growing very ill-tempered, began to gnaw itself ; and putting its large claws to its breast, it tore itself in two, and fell dead on the ground. But the club still

kept on beating the dead body, just as it had done when the serpent was alive, until Prince John told it to stop.

The prince left his good horse at the gates, where the tired animal could lie down and drink the refreshing water from the brook beside him or eat the fresh green grass that grew all round him, while the prince himself went in his invisible cloak and cap, with the club and the egg in his hands, to the immortal skeleton's castle. It was a very difficult climb to get up that rock; but after a great deal of trouble the prince at last reached the castle, and entered the garden. Suddenly he heard the sound of delightful dulcimers; and as he approached the spot from whence the sound came, he saw an old tree, on which hung a number of dulcimers playing of themselves; but *under* the tree sat his beloved Princess Helen, looking thoughtful and sad, but beautiful as ever. Prince John approached her, and taking off the invisible cloak and cap, he made her a sign to keep quiet; for she was about to utter a shout of joy and throw herself into his arms.

"I have brought the deceased she-skeleton," he whispered. "Wait for me here while I go in search of the immortal skeleton. When I have killed the wretch I shall come back to you, and we can ride off to my father's kingdom."

So saying, Prince John became once more invisible, and was about to go in search of the immortal skeleton in his enchanted castle, when the skeleton himself appeared on the scene, and walking up to the princess, he exclaimed,—

“How often must I tell you that you must not grieve and look so sad? Your Prince John will never come to look for you here; it would be impossible for him to do so. You are mine. I mean to be your husband, and nobody will dare to take you away! I—”

At this moment the club nudged the prince a little.

“All right,” said the prince; “begin!”

The club flew at the immortal skeleton, and beat him about with such violence that the creature howled, and turned any amount of somersaults in the air, while the prince, who was still invisible, kept crying out,—

“Beat harder, little club! beat harder! I want him to have a thorough good thrashing!”

“Who are you? and *where* are you?” cried the skeleton.

“Look, and you will see,” the prince replied, taking off his cloak and cap, at the same time throwing the egg on the ground, which broke in halves, making the immortal skeleton turn another of his somersaults; but this time it was fatal, for he gave a tremendous howl, and died.

The prince and princess then took the delightful dulcimers, the golden horse, and the cassowary, mounted their chargers, and rode homewards. As they looked back, they saw the rock behind them tremble and fall, while a dark cloud hovered over the spot.

On arriving at King Dymion’s kingdom, they found it locked in profound slumber; even the oxen

stood sleeping in the fields, with the ploughmen by their sides. All created animals were asleep. The leaves on the trees did not rustle, no wind brushed through the air, all was as still as in the grave. The people in the houses and in the street, walking, sitting, standing; all the cats, dogs, hens, horses, sheep, flies on the wall, and even the very smoke from the chimneys,—were all and each asleep. Such was the condition of the kingdom when Prince John rode through with the princess. They rode up to the palace, and there, on the marble steps, they saw the bodies of Prince Clement and Prince Peter, whom the immortal skeleton had killed.

Prince John went up the stairs; all was quiet. In the large hall there was evidently going to be a feast, people were standing all round, dressed in their Sunday best, but every one was sleeping. King Dymion was standing with all his courtiers behind him, while judges sat with unspoken words on their lips.

Prince John laughed at the sight, for it really was most amusing; then he brought in the dulcimers, and made them play. Hardly had they begun when up jumped all the people and began dancing, jumping, and turning somersaults—which were very fashionable in those days. The judges at once pronounced the words which they had not had time to utter. What they were I do not know.

When King Dymion woke and saw his beloved son standing before him with the beautiful princess, he was too delighted for words. He laughed, he cried, he looked at them, and fondled and embraced

them ; in fact, he became so jolly, and laughed so much, that his sides shook. He then ordered guns to be fired, the bells to be rung, and the kingdom to be lighted up for Prince John's benefit.

Next day Prince John and the fair Princess Helen were married. There was to be a grand feast later, to which the whole population of that kingdom was invited ; no one was to be left in the houses except the very old people and the very little babies. The club kept order, the delightful dulcimers played ; but when everything was ready, and the feast was at its best, the grey wolf appeared. And this is how it happened :—

After drinking and eating fairly well, King Dymion and the guests heard a tremendous noise outside the palace ; so they rushed to the windows to see what it was, and beheld a carriage of pure gold, drawn by eight horses, on which sat trumpeters with trumpets ; behind the carriage were six armed footmen on horseback, while at the sides ran six powdered footmen, with gold lace on their red plush uniforms. But the most wonderful thing of all was the coat-of-arms on the carriage door. It consisted of a shield with a wolf's tail on a field sable, surmounted by a count's coronet.

Prince John looked into the carriage window as it stopped before the palace-door, and exclaimed,—

“ This is my own dear old grey wolf again ! ” and he ran out to meet him. He opened the carriage-door himself, and helped his guest out.

After kissing each other very warmly, the prince took the wolf by the paw into the palace, and intro-



duced him to the king. The wolf returned King Dymion's bow, and then sat down on his hind-legs, greatly to the amusement of the guests, and respectfully complimented the ladies and gentlemen, saying such very agreeable things that it made them feel even more at their ease than they had done before.

The grey wolf's costume was most extraordinary. He had a red cap on his head with green feathers in it; round his neck he had a blue silk ribbon; he wore a red velvet jacket embroidered with gold, lilac gloves with lace ruffles, a scarf round his waist; on his hind-feet he had slippers, and on his tail he wore a silver net ornamented with diamonds.

The feast continued until very late at night; but as soon as it was dark the golden cassowary was brought in with its golden cage, and hung up on the balcony. The whole court shone like lightning immediately, so that no lamps were wanted, not even in the streets round about the palace, as the cassowary afforded light enough.

The grey wolf stopped all night at the palace, but when morning came he was ready to go. However, Prince John begged him to remain in the palace, saying that they would give him all the comforts that could be desired, and that they would even give him a set of rooms all to himself if he wished it. The grey wolf at last consented, much to the prince's joy.

After a long period of happiness King Dymion died, and left all the kingdom to his son, who lived to a very old age with his queen, and was surrounded by a number of beautiful children.

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The old grey wolf lived on happily with King John, who loved him dearly. The wolf nursed the children till they grew up big enough to nurse themselves; he also taught them to read and write. Besides this, he told them any amount of fairy tales, which they enjoyed better than anything else.

But when King John died, the poor wolf died too, out of pure grief. Then papers were found hidden in his rooms, telling his history; and from those very papers our story is taken.

## STARVELING.

ONCE upon a time there lived an old peasant with his wife, but children they had none; though they prayed and prayed night and day for a child to cheer them in their old age, no child made its appearance.

One day the peasant went out into the forest for mushrooms; and while he was gathering them, a very very old man came up to him, and putting his aged hand upon the peasant's shoulder, said kindly,—

“I know, my friend, what is troubling you. You are always wishing and praying that you might have some children. Is that not so? Very well, then, I will help you. Go to every yard in your village, and take from each hen-roost an egg, and then go home to your hut and put all the eggs you collect into your own hen-roost. What will happen after you will see for yourself.”

So saying, the old man disappeared.

Away went the peasant into the village to do the old man's bidding. He went into every yard—there were forty-one in number—and taking an egg out of each hen-roost, he returned to his own hut and put the forty-one eggs into his hen-roost.

In a fortnight's time the peasant and his wife went to the hen-roost to see what had happened to the eggs; but, what was their surprise and delight, to

behold forty-one tiny little boys! forty of whom were beautifully plump and rosy, while the forty-first was very thin and seemed delicate.

The peasants then began to think what names they should give all these forty-one boys, and, I must say, found it rather difficult. However, after a great deal of trouble, they at last settled on suitable names for the forty youngsters; but when they came to the forty-first, they were at a loss what name to give him.

"Call him Starveling," said the peasant at last to his wife, "for he looks so weak and half-starved."

Now these forty-one boys began to grow; not by days, but by hours; and were a great help to their parents, doing all the work for them. The forty lads who were so strong and healthy worked in the fields, while Starveling stayed at home and did all the house-work.

At last the hay-making time came, and the forty sons set to work to mow the grass in the fields. They worked for a week, and then returned home to eat, drink, and sleep as long as they could.

"Lazy fellows!" said the father, laughing; "they eat as much as they can and sleep more, but as to work, I don't suppose they have done anything!"

"Better go and see, father," said Starveling; "see whether they have worked before you call them lazy."

The peasant dressed himself the following morning, and went into the meadows to see what his sons had done, and saw, to his astonishment, forty hay-ricks standing in a row.

“What splendid lads!” exclaimed the peasant. “How well they have worked in that short week. I should never have thought it of them.”

Next day the peasant went again to have a look at the hay-ricks, but this time one was missing. When he saw this he at once bent his steps homewards, greatly distressed at the loss.

“My dear children,” he cried, “one of the hay-ricks is missing!”

“Never mind, father,” said Starveling, “we shall soon catch the thief. Give me a hundred pounds, and I will manage the whole thing for you.”

The peasant gave him the money, and Starveling went to a blacksmith, and said,—

“Can you make me a thick iron chain which, when thrown at a man, would wind itself round him from head to foot, and would not break however much the man struggled?”

The blacksmith set to work.

“See that you make it very strong,” Starveling said. “If it does not break I will give you a hundred pounds; but if it breaks, then your labour is lost.”

The blacksmith soon finished the chain and gave it to Starveling, who immediately began to wind it round himself as tightly as he possibly could; but when he struggled a little it gave way. The blacksmith then set to work and made it twice as thick and as strong as before. This time it was all right.

Starveling took the chain, gave the hundred pounds, and went to watch the hay. He seated himself under a hay-rick and waited.

Suddenly, at about midnight, the weather, which

had hitherto been delightfully calm and pleasant, changed ; the wind blew, the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the sea rose, while out of the midst of the furious waves came a wonderful white horse ; which galloped up to the first hay-rick, and commenced devouring the hay.

Starveling sprang up quickly, and throwing the iron chain round the horse, jumped on its back. The animal, not liking the sudden turn things had taken, tried to throw his rider off, but in vain. The horse then began galloping, jumping, and dancing about, but still Starveling kept his seat firmly. At last, finding that it was useless trying to get the young fellow off, the horse stopped suddenly, and turning his beautiful head to Starveling, said,—

“Young man, since you have been clever enough to catch me and ride on my back—which no one has ever been able to do before—I will make you a present of all my brother horses.”

So saying, this extraordinary creature went to the seaside, and began calling out something in a very loud voice, and immediately the angry waves rose, and out of the depths of the sea came forty white ponies, each prettier than the other. Starveling stared in astonishment, never had he seen such beautiful animals !

Next morning the peasant heard a terrific noise in the yard. He listened ; it sounded as though some one had by mistake driven a troop of horses into his farm, for the stamping and neighing was simply too dreadful ! He called his forty sons, and they all rushed into the yard to see what it meant, and

saw, to their surprise, Starveling sitting on a beautiful white horse, surrounded by forty equally beautiful ponies.

“Good morning, father!” cried Starveling, laughing. “I have brought a horse for each of my brothers. Look! are they not beauties?”

After each pony had been properly admired and fed, Starveling mounted his own horse again, exclaiming,—

“Come, brothers, mount your horses, and let us ride into the wide world in search of brides! It will be no easy task, certainly, for we want forty-one maidens, sisters, if possible!”

The brothers laughed; but anything for amusement! So, after receiving their parents' blessing, they set out on their journey, and a nice long journey it was, too!

They rode and rode, through various towns and kingdoms; but, no, forty-one brides was rather more than was generally asked for, especially as these forty-one youngsters insisted upon the brides all being sisters! for then there would not be any jealousy among the brothers. They rode on and on, until at last they came to the World's End; here they thought they would be sure to get what they wanted. So they went on merrily, until they beheld, on the top of a very steep hill, a white palace, round which was a very high wall, and in the middle a large iron gate, in front of which stood forty-one iron posts.

The forty-one brothers dismounted, and tying their horses to the posts, pushed open the iron gates, and

were about to walk in, when out came an old witch to meet them,—

“How dare you,” she cried, “tie your horses up to the posts without asking my permission?”

“Oh, never mind, old woman!” cried the brothers; “take us first into your palace, and give us something to eat and drink, and then talk about whatever you please, and scold us as much as you like.”

The old witch consented, and gave them food to eat and wine to drink, and when they had all made merry, the witch asked them kindly,—

“What do you want, young men? What are you in search of?”

“We are in search of forty-one sisters for brides.”

“I have any number of daughters.”

So saying, the witch ran upstairs to a high attic, and brought down with her forty-one beautiful damsels.

The young men fell in love with them at once, and began preparing for the wedding, which was to be a very grand one.

In the evening when they were all married and happy, Starveling went out to look after the horses, which had been left standing outside. When his horse saw him he began to stamp and neigh with joy.

“I am so glad you have come, dear master,” said the horse, “for I want to warn you against the witch. Listen! Before you go to bed to-night, tell your brothers each to dress up his young wife in his garments, while he puts on the dress of his wife; and



you must do the same, or else everything will be lost, for the witch is a wicked old woman."

"All right! I will do just as you say," replied Starveling, as he went off to his brothers, and told them what the horse had said.

The brothers at once put on their wives' dresses, and dressed the young girls up in their own clothes. When night came they all fell asleep, with the exception of Starveling, who kept himself wide awake, curious to know what was going to happen.

At about midnight he heard the witch, just outside his door, calling her servants,—

"Servants! servants! harken to my call; come and cut off the heads of all my uninvited guests!"

The door opened, and in came the witch with her servants, and, rushing to the bed where they thought Starveling lay, they cut off the head of the witch's daughter, and then, running into all the other rooms, cut off the heads of the forty girls, leaving the forty-one young men all alive and well instead of the witch's daughters!

As soon as this was done, Starveling got up and went to his brothers, woke them, and told them what had happened; then the young fellows took their wives' heads and hung them up in their rooms. After having done this, they ran to their horses, mounted them, and rode away.

Early the following morning the witch got up and looked into each little room; but what was her surprise to see the heads of her own daughters hanging on the wall. She grew furious, and, ordering her shield of fire, started off after the young men,

and began to send forth fire scorching everything on either side of her, trying to find out where the forty-one youngsters had gone to. At last she caught sight of them, and sent forth more fire to scorch them. What were they to do? In front of them was the dark blue sea; behind them the witch with her fiery shield, which was beginning to burn them. Nothing was left for them, except to drown themselves or be burnt to death!

But Starveling, who was always thoughtful and clever, had stolen a handkerchief from the old witch's palace. He waved this three times in front of him, and immediately a tremendous bridge appeared across the sea. When they had all galloped safely over, Starveling again waved the handkerchief three times, and the bridge at once disappeared, while the enraged witch had to return home to her palace and growl.

Meanwhile the forty-one young men gave up the idea of searching for any more brides, at least for the present, and returned home to their delighted parents.

### KING VLADIMIR AND THE SKELETON.

MANY, many years ago, there lived in a certain unknown kingdom a young king, called Vladimir, with his three beautiful sisters, Princess Natalia, Princess Olga, and Princess Anna, of whom he was very fond, doing everything in his power to amuse them and make them happy, for when the parents died they left the three princesses in young Vladimir's charge, telling him to be both father and mother to them.

"And on no account let your sisters refuse the first offers of marriage that they have," were the last words of the young king's parents.

One fine day King Vladimir and his three sisters, who had grown to be tall and beautiful girls, went out for a stroll in the magnificent grounds of the palace. Suddenly the clear blue sky became overcast with an angry black cloud, heralding the approach of thunder.

"Let us return to the palace," said the young king, "before the storm comes."

They had hardly time to get back when the thunder roared and the lightning flashed, and the ceiling of the apartment in which they were, opened and in flew a tremendous big black falcon; but the moment the bird touched the ground it changed into a handsome youth!

“Good-day to you, King Vladimir!” he said. “I have been all over the wide world, and now I want to marry, and settle down in my own country. I have come to ask for the hand of your sister, Princess Natalia.”

“If you really care for my sister,” returned the king, remembering his parents’ last words, “and my sister does not object, I am quite willing to have you for my brother-in-law, and will not stand in the way. Take her, and may the spirits of goodness bless you.”

Princess Natalia had no objection whatever; in fact, she rather liked the idea, for the young man was wonderfully good-looking.

So the falcon married the princess, and took her with him to his native land.

A whole year had passed away since the falcon’s visit to the palace, and the young king again proposed to go for a stroll in the grounds with his two sisters, when they once more beheld a black cloud in the blue sky.

“Another terrible thunderstorm,” said King Vladimir; “let us go back to the palace before we get drenched.”

They had just got safely in when down came the hail amidst the thunder and lightning. Again the ceiling opened; but this time an eagle flew in, and, changing itself into a young man, better-looking, if possible, than the first one, said,—

“Good-day, King Vladimir! Good-day, fair princesses. I have travelled all over the world, and am now going to return to my own kingdom. I have

come here on my way because I wish to marry your sister, Princess Olga."

"Very well," answered King Vladimir. "If you love my sister, I do not see why you should not have her. What do you say, Olga?"

Princess Olga, like her eldest sister, made no objection, but married the eagle, and returned with him to his native land, wherever that might be.

Another year went by.

"Come, sister!" said King Vladimir, "let us go for a walk in the garden."

They strolled about for some time, when again a dark cloud was seen in the sky. Again the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed.

"Let us make haste and return to the palace, or we shall soon be wet through," the king exclaimed.

They just got inside when the hail came down, and the storm became greater than ever. Then a tremendous crash was heard above them; the ceiling parted in two, and in flew a big black crow, which, however, immediately changed itself into a wonderfully handsome youth, far better looking than either of the two others.

"Well, King Vladimir, how are you?" asked the youth. "I have been enjoying myself all over the world, and now I am on my way to my own country, where I intend to settle down comfortably; but, first of all, I have come here to ask your sister, Princess Anna, to marry me."

"I think I can answer for my sister," King Vladimir replied; "for you are young and handsome, and likely to make her a good husband; so, if you really

care for her, take her, and may my best wishes attend you."

The crow married Princess Anna, and took her off with him to his own kingdom.

When King Vladimir was left all alone in the palace without his sisters, he very soon became heartily sick of everything, and thought he would go in search of the three princesses, and pay them a visit.

He set out on his journey, taking with him his favourite silver spoon, fork, and snuff-box. He went on and on until he came to a field, where there was an army, which had sustained a severe defeat, the ground being strewn with the dead and wounded.

"If there is a man among you who is not quite dead," cried King Vladimir, "would he kindly tell me who it was that defeated this army?"

"Marie-Marevna, the beautiful queen," replied one unfortunate creature, rising from the ground, in answer to King Vladimir's question.

The king continued his journey. He had not gone very far before he came to another field, where he found an encampment, and out of one of the tents came the beautiful queen Marie-Marevna. When she saw the king, she at once advanced towards him,—

"Good-day to you, King Vladimir!" she exclaimed, smiling sweetly. "What brings you here? Do you come on business, or for pleasure? Are you coming against your will?"

"No, certainly not, beautiful queen; I am coming for pleasure."

“Well, then, if you are in no very great hurry, stay with us in the camp for a short time.”

King Vladimir was delighted, and accepted the invitation eagerly. He spent two whole days in Marie-Marevna's society, and fell desperately in love with her, and ended by marrying her. The happy couple then left the encampment, and went off to Marie-Marevna's kingdom, where they both lived happily for a long time.

At last another war broke out, and Marie-Marevna was obliged to join her army, and leave King Vladimir to amuse himself, and look after the palace.

“Go wherever you please,” she told him; “do whatever you like; but mind you do not open this little door, or bad luck will attend you.”

King Vladimir, of course, promised to obey her, and for some time he did not venture near the forbidden door; but one day feeling rather lonely, and not knowing what to do with himself, he walked about the long galleries and oak staircases, until he found himself right in front of the door. He stopped before it, and hesitated; then, not being able to subdue his curiosity any longer, he turned the key, and—entered. He looked round him, and beheld a dreadful-looking skeleton hanging from the ceiling by twelve iron chains!

“Have pity on me, King Vladimir!” begged the skeleton. “Give me something to drink! I have been hanging here ten years in torment, without having a drop to drink or a morsel to eat. My throat is as dry as it can possibly be. Have some pity on me, King Vladimir!”

The king fetched a whole pail of water, and gave it to the skeleton, who at once finished every drop, and asked for more.

“One pailful will not quench my thirst, good king. Give me more !”

King Vladimir brought another, which vanished as quickly as the first.

“Give me more !” cried the skeleton.

When the creature had finished the third pailful his strength seemed to return to him. He shook the twelve iron chains, and with one wrench forced them all asunder, and the skeleton was free once more.

“Thank you, King Vladimir,” he said ; “but now you will see your Marie-Marevna no more.”

And, with a tremendous jump into the air, the skeleton sprang out of the window and flew away, leaving the unfortunate young king in a very unhappy state of mind. But how much greater was his grief when, on looking out of the window into the garden below, he saw the skeleton seize his beautiful queen, Marie-Marevna, who had just returned home from the war, and fly away with her.

After crying bitterly for some time, King Vladimir at last decided to go in search of his queen. “Come what may,” he thought, “I must find her again.”

Away he went, not forgetting to take his silver spoon, fork, and snuff-box. He walked on and on for two days without resting, and on the dawn of the third he came to a splendid palace, in the grounds in front of which stood an old oak-tree, on which sat a big falcon. As soon as the bird saw



him, he flew down to the ground, and changed himself into the handsome youth who had married the young king's eldest sister, Princess Natalia.

"Well, my dear brother-in-law," exclaimed the handsome youth, "how is the world treating you?"

Just at that moment Princess Natalia ran out of the palace to welcome her brother, and began embracing him and asking all kinds of questions. King Vladimir stayed with them for three days, and then said,—

"I can stop here no longer, much as I should like to do so; but I have to go and find my wife, Marie-Marevna, the beautiful queen."

"Ah! my friend," returned the falcon, "you will find that a very difficult task; but as you are bent on going, leave your silver spoon with us, so that we may not forget you."

King Vladimir did so, and went his way. He walked on for two whole days, and on the third he came to a still more magnificent palace, in front of which stood an oak-tree, and on it sat an eagle.

The eagle, however, flew down the moment he saw the young king, and changing himself into a handsome young man, called to his wife, the Princess Olga.

"Come out!" he cried. "Our dear brother has arrived."

Princess Olga ran out at once, and, throwing her arms round her brother's neck, asked him how he was, and what he intended doing with himself, and a great many more questions, which ended in making him stay with them for a few days. But at the end

of the third day King Vladimir became restless, and said,—

“I must not stay here any longer; I have to go in search of my wife, Marie-Marevna, the beautiful queen.”

“It will not be an easy task,” replied the eagle; “but leave your silver fork with us, in remembrance of you.”

King Vladimir obeyed, and continued his journey. On the morning of the third day he arrived at a still more beautiful palace, and there also stood an oak-tree, on which sat the big black crow who had married the Princess Anna, the king's youngest sister.

“Princess Anna,” exclaimed the crow, changing himself into a handsome young man on beholding the king, “come as quickly as you can, for your dear brother is here.”

After the usual greetings were exchanged, they all went into the palace, where King Vladimir spent three very merry days in the company of his sister and her husband, the crow; but on the third day he bid them good-bye.

“I must go and find my wife, Marie-Marevna, the beautiful queen.”

“Not a very easy thing, my brother,” the crow replied. “However, leave us your silver snuff-box, so that we may not forget you.”

King Vladimir gave them the snuff-box, and went on farther. After a three days' journey, he came to the skeleton's palace, a horrid, gloomy place, where, after some difficulty, he found the beautiful Marie-

Marevna, who, when she saw her dear one, threw her arms round him and began to weep bitterly.

"Oh, King Vladimir!" she cried, "why did you not listen to me? Why did you open that door after I begged you not to do so, and let that wretched skeleton loose?"

"Forgive me, dearest. Try to forget the past, and come with me; let us fly from here while the skeleton is not looking!"

Marie-Marevna was at first rather afraid; but at last, after a great deal of coaxing, she condescended to accompany her husband. All this time the skeleton had been out hunting. Towards evening he turned homewards, and as he was riding along his good horse began to stumble beneath him, a thing which it had never done before.

"What is the matter with you, you dissatisfied brute?" the skeleton asked. "Is there any great misfortune in the air?"

"Yes," returned the horse; "King Vladimir has been to your palace, and carried away Marie-Marevna, the beautiful queen."

"Can we not overtake them?"

"Oh, yes! You could even sow some wheat in the ground, and wait till it grows; you could reap and thresh it, and grind it into flour, and bake five ovens full of bread, and even after *that* you could easily overtake King Vladimir and Marie-Marevna!"

Off rode, or rather flew, the skeleton, and in a very short time he reached the unfortunate couple.

"I will forgive you this time, King Vladimir," exclaimed the skeleton, "for running away with

Marie-Marevna, and I shall endeavour to do so the second time, if you try to repeat this, because you were very kind to me when I was hanging in that room where you found me; but if you venture to come and take Marie-Marevna away from my palace a *third* time, then I will have no pity on you, but will cut you up into small pieces! Now, good-bye."

So saying, the skeleton seized Marie-Marevna and rode away with her, while King Vladimir seated himself on a stone and wept bitterly. But after a time, finding that all the tears in the world would not bring back his queen, he got up, shook himself, and went back to the gloomy palace where Marie-Marevna was kept prisoner. The skeleton was from home—he had gone back to his hunt.

"Come, dearest, let us fly!" the king whispered, when he found his wife.

"But *he* is sure to catch us again."

"Well, let him; at any rate, we shall have an hour or two to ourselves. Come!"

As the skeleton was returning from the hunt his horse again began stumbling.

"What is the matter now, you brute?" the skeleton asked. "Is there more misfortune in the air?"

"King Vladimir has been to the palace, and carried Marie-Marevna away with him."

"Shall we have time to overtake them?"

"Plenty. You could almost sow some barley and wait till it has grown, reap and thrash it, and make some beer for yourself—you might even drink it until you fall fast asleep, and when you woke up again

there would be plenty of time to overtake the king and Marie-Marevna."

Away rode the skeleton on his horse, and very soon overtook the fugitives.

"I have already told you, King Vladimir," said the skeleton, "that this will be the last time that I shall forgive you. If you run away with Marie-Marevna a third time, you are a dead man!"

He took the unfortunate queen away from her husband, and off he rode.

When left alone, King Vladimir again began to weep bitterly. This time he did not know what to do—he wanted to have Marie-Marevna back again, but, on the other hand, he had no particular wish to be turned into minced meat. However, nothing was to be done; he had to chance it. So he took courage, and returned to the horrible palace, where he found Marie-Marevna, looking as miserable as she could possibly look, and in tears. The skeleton had, as usual, gone hunting.

"Come, Marie-Marevna, let us try and get away from here before the skeleton returns!" the king said.

"I am afraid he will overtake us again, King Vladimir, and you know that if he catches us this time he will cut you up—he told you so."

"I know he did; but never mind, we may be able to escape him this time. Come!"

The horse again began stumbling as the skeleton turned homewards.

"What is it?" asked the skeleton. "Is there any more misfortune in the air, you brute?"

“King Vladimir has again carried off Marie-Marevna, the beautiful queen.”

The skeleton at once galloped off, and as soon as he reached King Vladimir, he seized him, cut him into several small pieces, which he carefully put into a little black box, fastened it with iron hoops, and threw it into the blue sea, and then rode away with Marie-Marevna, who was weeping bitterly.

Just at that time the silver spoon, fork, and snuff-box, which King Vladimir had given to his brothers-in-law as a remembrance of him, suddenly became black.

“Something very dreadful must have happened to our dear brother,” said the falcon, the eagle, and the crow. “Let us all three go and see what it is.”

So saying, they flew away together, and as they went the eagle noticed the little black box floating on the sea. He at once flew down and brought the box to the shore, where, with the help of the falcon and the crow, it was opened, and the remains of their brother-in-law, King Vladimir, were seen. The falcon at once went off in search of the water of life, while the crow went to fetch the water of death, leaving the eagle to keep watch. They soon, however, returned, and taking the pieces out of the box, they put them all properly together, and sprinkled the water of death over them. The pieces immediately became joined, and King Vladimir’s body became whole again; then the birds sprinkled it over with the water of life, and up jumped King Vladimir, alive and well again!

“How long I have slept!” he cried, rubbing his eyes.

“Yes, dear brother,” answered the birds, “and you would have slept still longer had it not been for us. But now let us return to our different homes, and you must come back with us, King Vladimir, and make a short stay, or a long one, as you like, with each of us!”

“Many thanks, dear friends, but I must go in search of my wife, Marie-Marevna.”

Then King Vladimir arrived at the skeleton’s palace, and after finding his beloved wife—who was greatly astonished at seeing him alive again—he said to her,—

“I see it is perfectly useless to try and get out of the skeleton’s hands, unless we can find a horse as good or better than his. Now I have no idea where to find one; so I want you to ask the skeleton how he came by his, and all about it; then you can tell me.

When the skeleton came home, and King Vladimir had left, to return again on the following day, Marie-Marevna found an opportunity of asking the necessary questions about the horse.

“I found him in the twenty-seventh kingdom, on the other side of the fiery river, where a dreadful old fairy lives, who has any amount of these wonderful horses. I served her for three days as a herdsman, and because I did my work properly, and did not lose any of the horses, she gave me one as a reward.”

“But how did you cross the fiery river?”

“I have a magic handkerchief in my possession. When I waved it three times to the right, a very high bridge appeared, so high that the flames could not reach it.”

On the following day, when the skeleton had gone out, King Vladimir came back, and asked Marie-Marevna whether she had done what he had told her. She at once repeated everything, and gave her husband the magic handkerchief, which she had found.

Away went the king. He crossed over the fiery river, and walked on and on for many a day without a drop to drink or a morsel to eat. Suddenly he saw, on some bushes in front of him, a beautiful foreign bird with her young.

"I think I will eat one of those little ones!" said the king aloud, "for I am very hungry, and they look tempting."

"Please don't, King Vladimir," begged the foreign bird, "for I may be of use to you shortly."

King Vladimir obeyed, and continued his journey, when he found himself in a dark forest, where he saw a beehive.

"I suppose there will be plenty of honey here," he said; "I can at least satisfy my hunger with some, for a short time."

But the queen bee flew out and cried,—

"Do not touch my honey, King Vladimir! I may soon be of use to you, if you leave it alone."

The king went on farther, and met a lioness with her cub.

"I think I shall eat that little cub, if the mother does not eat *me!*" said the king, "for I am dreadfully hungry, and don't mind what I eat just now."

"No! leave my cub alone, King Vladimir," the lioness answered; "do not touch it; I may be of great use to you soon."



"All right, don't be afraid!" replied the king, and went on, hardly knowing what to do for hunger.

At last he came to a curious-looking little hut, round which stood twelve poles, on eleven of which were human skulls.

"Good-day, old lady!" said King Vladimir, entering the hut, in which sat an old fairy.

"Good-day, King Vladimir! Why have you come?" Is it of your own free will, or on business?"

"I have come to serve you, and earn one of your good horses."

"Very well, King Vladimir; but you need not serve me longer than three days."

"All right, old lady; but now give me something to eat and drink. I am dying!"

The old fairy did as she was told, and then showed King Vladimir what he was to do.

Early next morning the king went to the stables, and let all the horses out; but he had hardly done so when the animals whisked their tails, and made off as hard as ever they could, into the meadows and far away. Before King Vladimir knew what had happened, they were out of sight. The king sat down on a stone, wondering what he had better do; he thought and thought, until he fell fast sleep. The sun was just setting when the king awoke, and found the beautiful foreign bird sitting on his shoulder.

"Get up, King Vladimir!" she said; "the horses are all at home and safe."

The king returned to the old fairy's hut, and heard her scolding the horses.

“Why did you come home?” she cried.

“What else were we to do?” the horses replied; “we ran off to the meadows, when down flew a number of birds of various colours, and nearly pecked our eyes out.”

“Well then; you must not go to the meadows to-morrow, but go and disperse in the dark forests.”

On the following morning the old fairy woke King Vladimir, and told him to go and look after the horses.

“Take care, King Vladimir!” she said; “if you lose one of my horses, your head shall be put on the twelfth pole.”

But the moment King Vladimir drove the horses into the fields, the animals galloped away in all directions into the surrounding forests.

The king again sat down on a stone, and began thinking what he had better do, until he fell fast asleep.

The sun had disappeared behind a forest, when the lioness came running up to the sleeping king.

“Get up, King Vladimir!” she said; “the horses are all safe in their stables.”

The king arose, and went back to the fairy’s hut, where he heard her scolding the horses as before.

“What made you come back, you good-for-nothings?”

“We could not help ourselves; the moment we got into the forests, a number of wild beasts came rushing out from all sides, and nearly tore us to pieces.”

"Well, then, you must go into the blue sea to-morrow."

In the morning the bad fairy sent King Vladimir to look after the horses.

"Mind you don't lose any of them, or your head shall be stuck on the twelfth pole."

But as soon as the king opened the stable doors, and let the horses out, the creatures at once galloped off before King Vladimir knew what had happened, and ran straight into the blue sea, and were covered up to their necks with water. King Vladimir could do nothing, so he seated himself on a stone to think, where he very soon fell asleep.

"Get up, King Vladimir," said a voice, and on waking up the young king saw the old bee, whose acquaintance he had made in the forest three days ago.

"Get up; the horses are all safe. Go back; but do not enter the hut, or let the fairy see you. Go into the very last stable, where you will find a mangy pony, lying on some hay in a corner; take it, and at midnight ride away on it as hard as you can."

King Vladimir thanked the bee, and went into the stable, where he hid himself behind some hay until midnight. He had hardly done so, when he heard the old fairy begin scolding the horses in the other stables.

"What made you return, you brutes?"

"We could not help ourselves, for when we had got into the sea a number of bees flew down upon us, and began stinging us so severely that we had to get out of the water, and run home as hard as we could."

The old fairy then went back to her hut and fell fast asleep. At midnight King Vladimir saddled the sick pony and rode away on it, until he reached the fiery river; he waved the magic handkerchief three times to the right, and immediately a very, very high bridge appeared; he crossed over, and then waving his handkerchief twice to the left, the bridge became very thin, and almost invisible.

In the morning when the fairy awoke, and found that both the king and the mangy pony were missing, she flew into a rage and gave chase.

"What a splendid bridge!" she cried, when she arrived at the fiery river; "just the very thing I want."

She commenced crossing over, but just as she got half way down went the bridge, broken right in two, and the old fairy fell head over heels into the fiery river.

Meanwhile King Vladimir led his pony into the green meadows, and made it drink some water from the silvery brooks, until it became quite well and strong again, seeming to be a wonderfully handsome and powerful horse.

In a very short time King Vladimir arrived at the skeleton's castle, and Marie-Marevna came running out to meet him.

"What have you been doing all this time?" she asked.

King Vladimir explained, and told her all that he had gone through.

"But now," he continued, "I have come to fetch you away."

"I am afraid to go, the skeleton may overtake us again."

"No, I don't think that is at all likely, for you see I have a splendid horse now, which runs quicker than the birds can fly."

They seated themselves on the animal, and away they went.

The skeleton who, of course, was not at home at the time, but had gone out hunting, now turned his horse round and rode back to his palace.

"What is the matter?" he asked, as his horse began stumbling again.

"King Vladimir came to your palace and has carried Marie-Marevna away with him."

"Can we overtake them?"

"Goodness only knows! King Vladimir has got such a splendid horse now, much better than I."

"Well, we can at any rate try our best to overtake them."

After a very, very long ride, the skeleton came in sight of the king and Marie-Marevna riding on a beautiful horse; he quickened his pace, and coming up to King Vladimir's side, he drew his sharp sword, and was about to thrust it into the young king's side, when King Vladimir's horse gave the skeleton such a severe kick that he fell down on to the ground, the animal then rushed at him, and trampling on his head crushed it like an egg. King Vladimir then piled up some wood, and putting the skeleton on it, set it all on fire, and reduced it to ashes, which were carried away by the wind.

Marie-Marevna seated herself on the skeleton's horse, while King Vladimir mounted his own, and they rode away on a visit first to the crow's kingdom;

then to that of the eagle ; and, lastly, the falcon's dominion. And at each place they were received with open arms.

"We never expected to see you any more, dear brother," they said ; "not having heard of you for such an age, we had quite given you up. However, we can well understand now why you were so very anxious to get your wife back again ; for such a beautiful woman as Marie-Marevna was never seen."

The young couple enjoyed their visits immensely ; they stayed a long time in each kingdom, and then returned to King Vladimir's dominions, where they lived happily for many a long year.

### THE QUICK RUNNER.

IN a very distant kingdom, a long, long time ago, there were a number of impassable swamps and bogs to be found, round which went a circuitous road. Now this road was so long that it took three years at the least to complete the circuit, and that with very fast riding; but at a slower pace it took five and more!

Near this road there lived a poor old man with his three sons; the first was named Ivan; the second, Vasselie, and the third, Simeon-the-Youthful.

One day it struck the old man that it would be a very grand thing to cleanse the swamps and the bogs, and make a straight road and build little bridges here and there, so that foot-travellers might pass through in three weeks, and those on horseback in three days and nights, travelling without a break. So he set to work with his sons, and after some time everything was ready. They bridged the worst part of the swamps and bogs by means of branches of the elder-tree, and so completed their straight road across. This done, the old man returned to his little hut, and after the lapse of a few days, he said to his eldest son, Ivan,—

“Go, my dear son, and hide yourself behind one of the little bridges, and listen to what the people say about us; whether they abuse us or praise us.”

Ivan obeyed, and concealed himself in a sheltered place under one of the little bridges. He had not very long to wait before he saw two old magicians coming along the straight road. When they were quite close to where Ivan lay hidden, he heard one say to the other,—

“I wonder who it was that cleansed these swamps and bogs? Whoever it was, he ought to be well rewarded.”

“Yes, brother!” said the other. “Whatever he asks for, whatever he wishes, shall be granted him at once.”

As soon as Ivan heard these words he came from his hiding-place, and said to the magicians,—

“My father, my brothers, and I made the road and the bridges.”

“What do you ask from us?” asked one magician.

“I should like to have sufficient money to last me during the whole of my life.”

“Granted. Go to the green field on the other side of the circuitous road; there you will find a rotten old tree, under which is a large cave full of gold and silver and precious stones. Take your spade and dig up the earth. You will then have enough money to last you your lifetime.”

Away went Ivan to the green field, and found everything just as the magicians had said. He took some of the gold, silver, and precious stones, leaving the rest in the cave for safety, and went home.

“Well, my son,” asked the old man, “did you see any one in the road? What did they say?”

Ivan told his father all about the magicians, what



they had said, and how they had granted his wish.

On the following day the old man sent his second son, Vasselie, to listen to what the people said about them.

Vasselie went, seated himself near the straight road behind some stray branches, and waited. Very soon he saw two magicians coming along.

"Everything that the man who cleansed these swamps may wish for shall be granted him," Vasselie heard one of the magicians say.

"Who is the good man, do you know?" asked the other.

Vasselie at once sprang forward,—

"I did it all, with my father and brothers!" he said.

"What do you want us to give you as a reward?"

"I should like to have sufficient bread to eat all the days of my life."

"Very well, go home, cut down the early ears of corn as they appear, sow them again, and you will have enough bread to last you your lifetime."

Vasselie thanked the magicians and returned home. He told his father what had happened, and then set to work to cut down and sow the corn as he had been told.

On the third day, Simeon-the-Youthful, the youngest of the three brothers, went and hid himself near the road. He had not to wait long before he saw two old magicians coming along, and talking to each other; he listened, and as they came nearer to him he heard them say,—

“Whoever helped to cleanse these swamps shall be rewarded by having all his wishes fulfilled.”

Simeon-the-Youthful came out of his hiding-place, and approaching the two magicians, said to them,—

“I helped my father and brothers to cleanse the swamps and bogs.”

“What is your greatest wish?”

“I want to become a soldier, and serve our great king.”

“Have you no other wish, good youth? for a soldier’s life is a hard one; if you become a soldier you will be taken captive by the King of the Sea, and then you will shed many a tear.”

“How odd old people are! Do you not know that if we do not cry in this world sometimes, we are sure to do so in the next.”

“Well, if you have made up your mind to become a soldier, go! and receive our blessings.”

So saying the magicians put their hands on Simeon’s shoulders, but the moment they did so he was changed into a swift-footed stag, and bounded away homewards.

When the old man and his two sons saw the lovely stag run up, they rushed out of the hut to catch it; but the stag was too quick for them, and ran off, far, far away out of sight, and overtook the two magicians, who at once changed him into a hare. And this hare, after jumping about a little, fled home, where the father and his sons stood looking out of window; they ran out of their hut when they saw the little animal and were about to seize it, but before they could do anything the hare had vanished from

their sight and had overtaken the magicians. This time they changed Simeon into a tiny little bird with a golden head. Away flew the little thing straight home and perched itself on the open window. The moment the father and sons saw it, they rushed to catch it, but before they got to the window the bird was off, and fluttered down upon the two magicians, who now changed it into Simeon-the-Youthful again.

“Now go to the king’s court,” said the magicians, “and become a soldier. If you are obliged to go anywhere quickly, you can change yourself into a stag, hare, or into a little bird with a golden head ; we have taught you how to do it.”

Simeon-the-Youthful thanked them, and returned home and asked his father to let him go to the king and become a soldier.

“Become a soldier !” cried the old man. “Why you are not half tall enough, and not over clever ; how could you be a soldier ?”

“Please let me go, father ; I have got the magicians’ blessing, so that I am sure to serve the king well.”

His father at last gave his consent, and Simeon-the-Youthful dressed himself up in his Sunday best, took leave of his father and brothers, and started off to the king’s court.

In due course he arrived at the palace, and was brought before the king, who at once asked him what he wanted.

Your Majesty,” he said, going down on his knees before the king ; “I have come to ask you to take me into your royal service as a soldier.”

“But you are not tall enough, young man! How can you become a soldier?”

“Though I am not so tall as I should like to be, Your Majesty, I will serve you as well as the tallest of your court, if you will but try me.”

The king at last agreed, and took him as a soldier, and told him always to be near him.

After some time of peace and quiet a king of a neighbouring kingdom declared war against Simeon's master, who began to equip himself for the campaign and get his forces ready. Simeon begged the king to let him join the army and accompany him to the war. At first the king was reluctant, but Simeon begged so very hard that he at last consented.

The whole army assembled and started on the march; they passed through many lands, and went on and on until they were very near to the enemy's camp. Suddenly the king found that both his sharp-edged sword and mace were missing. What could he have done with them? Had he left them at the palace? If so, what was he to do? How was he to get them? The palace was many, many thousand miles away; he had nothing to defend himself with, and nothing with which he could beat down the enemy. He called to his army to halt, and asked his men whether any of them would undertake to go with all possible speed to the palace and bring him his sword and mace; whoever would do this service for him, to him he would give his daughter, the lovely Princess Nastasia, for a bride, and half of his kingdom besides.

Some of the men said they could do it in a year,

some in six months, some in three months. At last Simeon-the-Youthful came up to the king, saying,—

“I can go to the palace, your Majesty, and bring you your sword and mace in three days.”

The king was delighted, and taking Simeon by the hand he embraced him, and wrote a note for him to give to Princess Nastasia, in which he told her to give the bearer his sword and mace, which he had forgotten. Simeon took the note and went on his journey.

As soon as he was out of sight, and was sure that no one saw him, he quickly changed himself into a swift-footed stag, and bounded away over stock and stone, up hill and down dale, until he grew tired; he then changed himself into a hare, and away he went until his little feet became so tired that he changed himself into a pretty little bird with a golden head. He flew and flew, and at about noon the next day he reached the palace. He changed himself into his proper shape again, and entering the palace, gave the princess the note.

Princess Nastasia broke open the seal, and after reading the note, turned to Simeon, and said,—

“How did you manage to get over so much ground in so short a time?”

Simeon explained how he had changed himself first into a stag, then into a hare, and lastly into a little bird with a golden head; and so that she might believe him, he changed himself into a stag and ran about in the princess's chamber, and then came up to her and rested his pretty head on her lap. The princess took her little silver knife and cut off

a tuft of the fur ; this done, the stag changed into a hare, and jumped about the room for a little while, and then sprang up on to the princess's lap. She again took her little knife and cut off a little of the fur. The hare then changed into a little bird with a golden head, and flew about in the room, and then perched itself on the princess's shoulder. Princess Nastasia cut one of the little golden feathers off the bird's head, and then tied the two tufts of fur and the feather up in her handkerchief, and hid them in her dress, while Simeon became himself again.

The princess ordered food and wine to be brought him, and then gave him her father's sharp-edged sword and mace. After that they embraced each other and parted. Simeon changed himself into a stag again, and started off on his journey back to the king ; transforming himself, when tired, into a hare, and then into a bird. Towards the end of the third day he came in sight of the king's encampment. When he came within thirty paces of the army he lay down under some bushes near the sea-shore to rest his weary limbs, and putting the sword and the mace by his side, he soon fell fast asleep.

Just at that time a general happened to be passing by the bushes, and on seeing the sleeping Simeon, he stopped, and pushing him into the sea with his foot, took the sword and mace, and went to the king.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I have brought you the sword and mace myself, for that stupid fellow Simeon is not likely to return for at least three years."

The king thanked the general, and the battle

commenced. In a very short time the king defeated his enemy, and gained a splendid victory.

We have already said that Simeon-the-Youthful fell into the deep blue sea. As he was falling the King of the Sea caught him in his arms and took him down into the very depths below. He lived with that king for about a year, and then growing very dull and miserable, began to cry bitterly.

“What is the matter, Simeon-the-Youthful?” asked the King of the Sea. “Do you find it dull down here?”

“Yes, Your Majesty, I am beginning to feel dull.”

“Would you like to have a look at the Russian world?”

“I should like nothing better, if Your Majesty will allow me.”

The King of the Sea took him up at midnight, and left him on the shore, while he vanished in the sea.

Simeon-the-Youthful, when left to himself, began to pray to the saints for sun. His wish was granted, but just as the sun rose, the King of the Sea appeared, and seizing Simeon carried him off once more into the depths below.

Simeon-the-Youthful lived with the King of the Sea for another whole year, and again became very dull and miserable, and shed many a tear.

“What, are you beginning to feel dull again?” asked the King of the Sea.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” replied Simeon.

“Would you like to have another look at the Russian world?”

“I should very much, Your Majesty.”

At midnight the King of the Sea took Simeon, and putting him again on the shore, left him there.

Simeon-the-Youthful began at once to pray to the saints for sunlight.

This time the rays of the sun shed so powerful a light over the whole earth that the King of the Sea was unable to show himself, and take Simeon captive.

Simeon-the-Youthful then changed himself into a stag, and bounded away with all possible speed to his master's kingdom; on, on he ran, changing himself into a hare and then into a bird, until he at last reached the palace.

While all this had been taking place with Simeon, the king had returned from the war, and had given his lovely daughter, the Princess Nastasia, in marriage to the deceitful general.

When Simeon-the-Youthful came to the palace, he walked into the very hall where the king, his daughter, the general, and some of the courtiers were seated at table, dining. The moment Princess Nastasia beheld Simeon, she rose from the table, and turning to the king, her father, said,—

“Father, I should like to be allowed to speak.”

“Speak out, my darling daughter. What is it you wish to say?”

“That man who has just entered is my bridegroom, and not the one who is seated at table!”

Then turning to Simeon, she said,—

“Show my father how you managed to get here in three days from the battlefield, to fetch his sword and mace.”



Simeon-the-Youthful at once obeyed ; he changed himself into a swift-footed stag, and ran about the hall, and then stopped before the princess, who took out the tuft of fur from her handkerchief and showed the king the place from whence she had cut it.

“ Look, father,” she said, “ behold the proof ! ”

The stag then changed into a hare, and after jumping about the room, came to a standstill before the princess, who took out the bit of fur which she had cut off, and showed it to her father.

The hare then changed into a little bird and flew about in the room, and then perched on the princess's arm. Princess Nastasia brought out the little golden feather and showed that also.

The king then understood the whole thing, and ordered the wicked general to be thrown into prison, and gave Princess Nastasia in marriage to Simeon-the-Youthful, whom he made his heir ; and they all lived happily ever after.

## HONESTY AND DISHONESTY.

ONE day two peasants were conversing; one of them was boastful and untruthful, the other famed for truthfulness and honesty. The one was saying that it was better to live, telling lies and cheating everybody, and be rich; while the other replied that it was far better to live in poverty, as long as you were honest and truthful. So they began to dispute and quarrel, neither of them wishing to give in. They at last decided to go out into the village high-road, and ask the opinion of the very first person they met.

They walked and walked, and soon saw a peasant ploughing in a field close to the road; they went up to him, and said,—

“Good man, judge our quarrel: how is it better to live in the wide world—honestly or dishonestly?—telling the truth or by telling lies?”

“Ah, my brothers, you cannot possibly live honestly in this world all your life! You must tell a lie now and then! Besides, an honest and truthful man must walk about all his life in straw shoes, while a liar and a dishonest man can walk in handsome boots. Take us, for example, our masters unjustly take our days from us,<sup>1</sup> leaving no time for us to

<sup>1</sup> The serfs were allowed three days in the week to work for themselves, while the other three days belonged to their masters.

work in; we therefore have to pretend that we are overcome by sickness, and during that time go wood-cutting in the forest; if wood-cutting is forbidden by day, we go at night. We have always to dodge about in this world, my friends. We could not possibly get on otherwise."

"Do you hear that?" said the liar to the honest man. "What I told you was perfectly true!"

But his companion would not be convinced, so they walked on farther, till they came across a merchant driving a waggon.

"Stop for a moment, good sir!" they cried; "we want you to do us a favour, if you will not resent it, and promise not to be angry with us."

"What is it?"

"We want you to decide our quarrel, and tell us whether it is better to live honestly in this world or dishonestly?"

"Ah, my children! it is difficult to live honestly. For my part, I think it is best to be dishonest; people cheat us, so why should we not cheat them?"

"You hear!" cried the liar to his companion. "This good man is of my opinion, like the other."

Still the truthful man would not listen to his friend, so they went on farther and met a noble coming along the road; they stopped him, and said,—

"Kindly judge our quarrel for us; how is it best to live in this world, honestly or dishonestly?"

"Well, you certainly have found something to quarrel about. You must have been very hard pressed for conversation. Of course, being dishonest is the only way to get on. What honesty and truth

fulness is there in this world? You get sent to Siberia if you are honest and tell the truth!"

"You see, my friend, I am right after all!" said the liar. "Every one thinks as I do, that it is better to live dishonestly."

"No," said the truthful man, "it is *not* better, and I do not intend to live dishonestly, to please any one. If any misfortunes happen to me—well, let them!"

After this the two men went off in search of work; they journeyed on together for some time. The dishonest man always knowing how to adapt himself to the company he was in, wherever he went he had plenty to eat and drink and nothing to pay; while the honest man had to work for every drop of water and morsel of bread he got—yet he did not grumble, he was perfectly satisfied.

The dishonest man meanwhile laughed to himself as he watched his companion.

When they had at last passed the village and reached the open country, where there were no inns or houses of any kind, the honest man became very hungry, and asked his companion to give him a morsel of bread, for he had plenty.

"But what will you give me for the bread?"

"Take whatever you like, though I have not much to lose."

"Well, then, let me put out your eye!"

"Very well, put it out!"

The horrid man did so, and gave him a very small piece of bread in return.

They went on and on, until the honest man again

became hungry, and asked his friend for another piece of bread.

“Very well, on condition that you let me knock out your other eye!”

“But if you do that, brother, I shall be blind!”

“Well, what matters, you are an honest, truthful man, you ought not to mind!”

“Well, if it must be so, it must! One cannot put up with hunger; if you are not afraid of committing the sin, knock out my eye and be happy.”

The wretch did so, and giving his unfortunate companion a still smaller piece of bread than the first, left him in the middle of the deserted country-road, and said,—

“Go, find your way by yourself. *I* am not going to lead a blind man about!”

After having eaten his piece of bread, the blind man felt his way along.

“Perhaps,” thought he, “I may manage to find my way to the next village.”

But he soon lost his way, and did not know where to go. He stopped, and throwing himself on his knees, began to pray to the saints to help him.

“Do not forsake me, miserable sinner that I am!” he cried.

He prayed and prayed for a long time, and then heard a voice quite close to him saying,—

“Turn to your right, good man, and you will come to a forest where you will hear the murmur of a fountain; feel your way to it, bathe your eyes in the clear water, and your eyesight will be restored.

You will then see a large oak-tree, climb up into it, and stop there through the night."

The blind man turned to the right, and with some difficulty reached the forest. He crawled along a path which soon brought him up to the murmuring fountain, and dipping his hands into the water, he began bathing his eyes. No sooner had he done so when his eyesight returned, and he was able to look about him once more. Not very far from the fountain stood an old oak-tree, under which the grass seemed to have been greatly trampled down, and the earth around was dug up here and there and scattered about everywhere. He climbed up into the tree and waited until nightfall.

At about midnight a number of evil spirits came flying down from all sides on to the trampled grass, and began boasting about what they had done and where they had been. One little devil said,—

"I went to the beautiful princess, the king's daughter, and tormented her all day. I have gone on tormenting her for over ten years, and no one can cast me out, though many a handsome prince has tried, but all in vain ; and, between ourselves, no one will ever succeed unless some fellow obtains that large image of the Virgin Mary, which is in the possession of a certain wealthy merchant ; but then no one would ever think of that, and besides, if they did, the merchant would never part with it."

In the morning when all the devils had flown away, our friend the truthful man, who had heard the whole of the conversation, came down from his hiding-place in the tree and went in search of the rich merchant.

After inquiring everywhere, he at last found the merchant, and asked him to take him as a workman, saying,—

“I will work hard for you for a whole year, but I want no wages. All I ask for is to have the famous image of the Virgin Mary which is in your possession.”

The merchant consented, and the man worked away night and day, without a moment's rest, for he was very anxious to please his master. When the year was over he came to the merchant and asked for his reward.

“I am more than pleased with your work,” the merchant said; “but I do not wish to part with the picture. Would not money do as well? You could have as much of it as you pleased, if that would satisfy you.”

“No; money would be of no use to me. Give me what you promised, and what you agreed upon when you took me.”

“It is hard for me to part with that picture; in fact, I don't know what I should do without it! Still, if you will work another year for me, I will give it to you.”

There was no help for it, and the truthful man was obliged to consent.

When the year was over, the merchant was again loath to part with the picture.

“I would rather reward you with all possible treasures,” the merchant said, “than part with the picture; but if you are determined to have it, you must stop with me and work for another year.”

It was difficult to argue with such a rich and

influential man as the merchant ; besides, it would not have been wise, under the circumstances. So our friend stayed and worked for his master another whole year, better and harder, if possible, than before.

At the end of the third year the merchant actually took down the picture from the wall, and gave it to the man, saying,—

“Take it, my good fellow, for you have worked so hard and so well, without ever grumbling, that I cannot refuse you this time ; take it, and may the saints bless you.”

The truthful man thanked the merchant, and taking the picture went to the king's palace, where the devil was tormenting the princess.

“I can cure the princess,” he said to the servants and people at court. When they heard this they seized him by the hands and brought him before the king, who was sitting on his throne, looking the picture of misery.

The king at once had him taken to the room where the afflicted princess was kept. The man then asked for a large bowl of fresh water, into which he dipped the picture three times, and then bringing the water to the beautiful princess made her bathe her face in it. Hardly had she done so, when out sprang the demon, writhing until he became lifeless. When the enemy had expired, the lovely damsel became quite well and bright again.

The king and queen were delighted, and did not know how they could best reward the good man who had proved such an excellent doctor. They wanted to ennoble him ; they wanted to give him a quantity



of all kinds of treasures and good things ; but no, he would have nothing.

“ I don't want anything,” he said.

“ I shall marry him,” the princess whispered to her father, “ if he would care to have me ! ”

“ Very well ! ” replied the king.

As for our friend he did not object in the least, but was delighted. The wedding was then prepared, and the news immediately spread all over the kingdom, so that when the great day arrived there was quite a crowd to see the bride and bridegroom.

From that day forth our friend, the truthful man, lived in the palace, was clad in royal garments, and dined at the king's table.

Time passed, and our friend asked the king and queen to let him go and have a look at his own country.

“ I have an old mother living in the village from which I come, and I want to see her again.”

“ Let us go together,” said the princess.

So they drove off in a lovely carriage and pair belonging to the king.

They drove and drove, and on their way they met the wretch who had knocked out our friend's eyes.

When the king's son-in-law saw him he stopped the carriage, and called out,—

“ How are you, my brother ? Have you forgotten me ? Do you not remember the quarrel we had together about honesty and dishonesty ? and you knocking my eyes out because I did not agree with you.”

The wretch began to tremble and did not know what to do or what to say.

“Do not be afraid, my friend,” said the other ; “I am not angry with you.”

And then he began to explain everything to the dishonest man ; how he had gone to the forest, and what he had heard there, and how he had worked three years for the rich merchant, and then received the picture of the Virgin Mary, and had at last married the king’s beautiful daughter.

When the dishonest man heard this, he thought he would also go into the forest and climb up the old oak-tree.

“Perhaps,” said he to himself, “I shall be just as fortunate as my friend !”

So he went to the forest, found the murmuring fountain and the old oak-tree, into which he climbed and waited until nightfall.

At midnight the evil spirits again flew down from all sides on to the grass below ; but this time they looked up, and seeing the dishonest man hiding in the tree, they seized him and tore him into a number of very small pieces.

**FOMA BERENNEKOFF**

THERE lived once an old woman who had an only son, called Foma Berennekoff. One day Foma went out ploughing; his horse was a poor, lean creature, and was not of much use. Foma generally left it by the dung-hill to rest, and went on with his work by himself. On this occasion the unfortunate animal was being greatly tormented by a number of flies, which would persist in buzzing round him and tickling his nose.

Foma rushed forward, and taking a dry branch began switching it on the dung-heap where the flies were in great numbers, and then set to work to count how many he had killed. He counted up to five hundred; but seeing that there were still many hundreds more lying dead, he came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to count them all.

He then turned to his horse, and saw twelve gad-flies sitting on it; he killed them, and, mounting the animal, rode off home to his mother, and asked her for her blessing.

"I have killed a number of small giants," he said, "so many that I could not count them all, and twelve mighty heroes. And now, mother dear, I want you to let me go and become a soldier, for ploughing is no business of mine, it is only fit for a mujik!"

His mother gave him her blessing, and then he sloped a sickle over his shoulders like a sword, and, tying the blunt blade of an old scythe to his wrist, mounted his old horse and rode away.

Foma went on and on until he came to an unknown part, where, in the middle of a broad road, stood a sign-post with nothing on it. He rode up; he had neither gold nor silver, but he happened to have some chalk in his pocket, so he wrote with this chalk,—

“The mighty Foma Berennekoff, who with one blow killed twelve powerful heroes, and an endless number of small giants, rode by here.”

When he had finished writing this, he rode on farther.

Riding along the very same road came a handsome young fellow, Elie Muromitch by name, and stopping at the sign-post read what was written on it, and said to himself,—

“That, certainly, was a very heroic action; but whoever this wonderful man is he did not waste his gold and silver to write with, but only used plain chalk!”

And he wrote underneath in silver,—

“After Foma Berennekoff rode the valiant Elie Muromitch!”

He then overtook Foma, and addressed him thus,—

“Powerful hero, Foma Berennekoff! tell me where I am to ride. Shall I pass in front of you or keep behind?”

“Better keep behind!” said Foma.

A little later there came riding along the road a rich and handsome youth, called Aleyosha Papovitch,

junior. He rode up to the post, and reading the inscriptions on it, took out some pure gold, and wrote,—

“After Elie Muromitch rode Aleyosha Papovitch, junior.”

He then galloped up to Elie Muromitch.

“Tell me, Elie Muromitch,” he asked, “where I had better ride, in front of you, or behind you?”

“Ask my elder brother, Foma Berennekoff, and not me.”

So Aleyosha Papovitch, junior, rode up to Foma Berennekoff, and asked with great politeness,—

“Brave champion, Foma Berennekoff! Where do you command Areyosha Papovitch to ride?”

“Ride on behind!” Foma returned

On they went, these three young fellows, through various unknown parts, until at last they came to some beautiful gardens. Elie Maromitch and Aleyosha Papovitch both pitched their white tents, while Foma Berennekoff stretched his smock-frock.

Now these gardens belonged to a king—the White King, as he was called—who was just then going to war with a false king and his six wonderfully powerful warriors, whom no one had yet been able to withstand.

When the white king heard of the arrival of Foma and his companions, he sent him (Foma Berennekoff) a note, in which was written as follows,—

“The false king has declared war against me. May I hope for your valuable assistance?”

Foma was not very good at reading. However after shaking his head, and turning the note over a

great many times, he at last made it out, and looking at the messenger, said,—

“All right!”

A few days later the false king drew nearer, and encamped quite close to the town.

“The king and his army are going off to the war,” said both Elie Muromitch and Aleyosha Papovitch, coming up to Foma Berennekoff, “and he must be protected. Will you go yourself, or shall one of us go?”

“Go you, Elie Muromitch!” said Foma.

Away galloped Elie Muromitch, and killed all the six powerful warriors in a very short time. Still the false king was not to be subdued, so he brought out six other warriors, more powerful than the last, and a large army besides.

Elie Muromitch and Aleyosha Papovitch came up to Foma Berennekoff and said,—

“Tell us, great Foma! Will you go yourself this time, or send us?”

“Go you, brother Aleyosha Papovitch, junior!”

Away went Aleyosha Papovitch, junior, and in a very short time killed the whole of the large army, and the six powerful warriors besides, and then rode back to his tent.

“Well!” said the false king, “I have fortunately still another warrior left, and he is more powerful than all the others put together. I have hitherto kept him with his people; but now, I shall allow him to go and fight!”

So he sent a large army and his one powerful warrior, to whom he said secretly,—

“These Russian warriors do not defeat us with strength, but only by cunning; so whatever you see the Russian warriors do, you must at once imitate!”

Elie Muromitch and Aleyosha Papovitch, junior, again came to Foma Berennekoff, and asked as before,—

“Are you yourself going to fight this time, or will you send us?”

“I shall go myself; bring me my horse.”

The three horses were in the fields grazing. Elie Muromitch went up to Foma's horse, which was kicking and biting itself. Elie Muromitch felt vexed when he saw the wretched animal. So taking it by its tail, he threw the creature over his shoulder.

“Suppose Foma Berennekoff had seen you,” whispered Aleyosha Papovitch, junior; “wouldn't he have given it you?”

“I don't think he cares so very much for his old horse,” replied Elie Muromitch. “The animal is not of much use to him. All the power lies in the *man*, and not in the horse!”

So saying he led the sorry beast to Foma Berennekoff, who at once seated himself on the animal, and rode away. Suddenly he stopped.

“I think I had better tie up my eyes!” he thought; “things will not seem half so dreadful and cruel then!”

He tied up his eyes with his handkerchief, and lay forward on his horse.

When the enemy's powerful warrior saw Foma with his eyes tied up, he thought,—

“Ah, that shows that he has perfect confidence in

himself! Well, I will do the same! I am no worse than you, my friend! I will show that I have just as much confidence in myself!"

So he tied up his eyes, and jumped on his splendid horse.

Meanwhile, Foma Berennekoff grew very tired of waiting. He lifted up his handkerchief to look, and smiled to himself. Then galloping up to the warrior, he seized his steel sword, and with one blow cut his head off. Then catching hold of the warrior's horse, he tried to jump on its back, but in vain; every time he endeavoured to do so the animal threw him over and commenced kicking in all directions. At last Foma tied the creature to an old oak, and climbing up the tree sprang from it on to the horse's back. As soon as the animal scented the rider on him, he wrenched himself, and tearing the old oak out, roots and all, galloped away as hard as he possibly could, dragging the heavy old tree after him.

Foma Berennekoff meanwhile was in a dreadful fright as he sat on the horse's back, crying,—

"Help me! help me!"

The enemy trembled and ran about frightened in all directions; while the splendid horse trampled them under his feet, and beat them all round with the tree, and very soon killed every man there, not leaving a single one alive. When the animal at last quieted down, he allowed Foma to ride him properly, and do as he pleased with him.

The false king then sent one of his messengers with a note to Foma Berennekoff, in which it was said,—



"I shall never more attempt to make war with you!"

Foma was quite agreeable to this, for he had no desire to be in any more battles.

When Elie Muromitch and Aleyosha Papovitch, junior, heard all that had happened they marvelled greatly.

Foma Berennekoff then returned to the white king.

"How can I reward you?" asked the white king. "Take from the royal treasury as much gold as you please, or you may have half of my kingdom, or if you like you may marry the beautiful princess, my daughter."

"I think I would rather marry the princess, if she would care to have me; and I should also like my two younger brothers, Elie Muromitch and Aleyosha Papovitch, junior, to be asked to the wedding."

So Foma Berennekoff married the beautiful princess, and lived with her in the palace very happily, and was lucky all his life, and until his death he was always known and spoken of as the great and powerful warrior, Foma Berennekoff.

### THE BLACKSMITH AND THE DEVIL.

ONCE upon a time there lived an old blacksmith who had an only son, a bright, intelligent boy of six.

One day the blacksmith went to church, and began praying before a large holy picture. On looking at the picture more attentively, he saw painted on it a very big devil, such a dreadful-looking creature—all black, with long horns and fierce tail.

“That is something like a devil!” thought the blacksmith to himself. “I think I shall have one painted exactly like it, in the smithy!”

So when he returned home he engaged a house-painter, and told him to paint on the door of the smithy a devil exactly like the one he saw in the holy picture at church. The house-painter obeyed, and in a very short time he completed his order.

From that day forth, whenever the blacksmith entered the smithy, he used to look at the devil on the door, and say in a friendly way,—

“Good-day to you, my countryman ; I hope I see you well !”

He would then make a roaring fire, and betake himself to his work. After living for over ten years in perfect harmony with the devil, the blacksmith died, and left his son to continue the business, who, being very fond of that sort of work, got on remarkably

well. But one thing the young blacksmith would not do, and that was to regard the devil with the same respect with which his father had treated it before him. When he went into the smithy in the morning he never by any chance greeted the devil, and instead of saying a kind word or two, he would take up a large iron hammer, and give the unfortunate devil three blows on the forehead, and then go on with his work.

Three years went by, during which he continually treated the evil-spirit to the hammer. The devil bore all this very patiently for some time, but at last he could stand it no longer.

"I have had enough of this!" thought the devil. "I can stand these insults no more. I will be artful, and pay him out somehow or another!"

So the devil changed himself into a young man, and entered the smithy.

"Good-day, uncle!" the devil said.

"Good-day, young fellow; what do you want?"

"I have come to ask you whether you would take me for an apprentice. I can, at any rate, carry the coals for you, and blow the bellows, to commence with!"

The blacksmith was delighted.

"Yes; why not?" he cried. "It will be more amusing to have some one else with me!"

So the devil began to learn and help the blacksmith, and in about a month's time he knew everything much better than the master himself. What the blacksmith could not do, the devil did for him; and very soon he won the affections of the blacksmith,

who became so fond of him, and so pleased with everything he did, that it would be impossible to relate in this story. In fact, he very soon left off coming to the smithy, for he had such perfect confidence in the devil that he let him manage everything himself, and left the shop in his charge. One day the blacksmith was away from home, and the devil was quite alone in the smithy. After working a little, he went to the door to have a look at the passers-by. As he stood there he saw an old lady driving along in her carriage; he made a sign to the coachman to stop, and then cried out to the old lady,—

“Walk in here, my lady. A new business has been started, whereby we can turn all old people into young ones again! Pray walk in!”

The old lady did not wait to think, but getting out of her carriage, entered the smithy.

“Is this really so?” asked the old lady. “Can you change old people into young ones, or are you only boasting?”

“If I did not understand my business, my lady,” said the evil spirit, “I should not have invited you in!”

“What do you charge?”

“Five hundred roubles.”

“Very well, here is the money. Now make me young once more.”

The evil spirit took the money, and then sent the coachman into the village, saying,—

“Go, and bring me two buckets full of milk.”

This done, he seized the old lady, and threw her

into the furnace, where she was burnt up to her bones, which alone were left whole. When the coachman brought the two pails of milk the devil poured them into a very large tub, and taking all the bones threw them into the milk. And in about three minutes out came a young lady, alive and beautiful!

She thanked the devil, and seating herself in her carriage drove home to her husband, who stared at her in amazement when she entered the room in which he sat, and did not recognize his wife!

“Why do you stand staring there, like an idiot?” cried the lady. “Don’t you see that I have become young and stately again? But now I do not wish to have a husband who is old and grey, so go to the blacksmith at once and be made young again, or I do not wish to know you, or have anything more to do with you. Go!”

The husband had to obey, or he knew he would suffer for it; so away he went.

Meanwhile the real blacksmith had returned, and on going into the smithy he found his workman missing. He searched and searched, but all in vain. He asked his neighbours whether they had seen him; but no, no one knew anything, and no trace of him was to be found. The blacksmith then set to work by himself, and began hammering away. Just as he was in the midst of his work, up drove a carriage, and the old lady’s husband entered the shop.

“Make me into a young man!” he cried.

The blacksmith stared.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said, “but are you in

your right senses? How can *I* make you young again?"

"You ought to know that best yourself."

"But I assure you, sir, I don't know anything."

"You lie, you rascal! If you could make my *wife* young again, I suppose you can do the same with *me*. If you don't do this, I shall never be able to live with her any more."

"But I never set eyes on your wife."

"Never mind! Then your workman must have seen her, and made her young again; and if *he* could do so, then you, who are the master, ought certainly to be able to do it also! Now, then, look alive, my friend! If you don't, woe betide you!"

The blacksmith was thus forced to change the old man into a young one, but how? He began asking the man what his workman had done, and how he did it and what it was he used, and any amount of other questions, which the old man answered as best he could, for his wife had told him something about the milk being ordered, and also about her sudden plunge into the fiery furnace.

"Well," thought the blacksmith to himself, "whatever happens, I must try and obey the extraordinary order. If I succeed, so much the better; if not, then I shall get into as bad a mess as if I had not obeyed the order at all."

So he caught the old man by the legs and threw him into the furnace, and then began blowing at him with the bellows. The unfortunate man was soon burnt to ashes, and nothing but the bones remained. These the blacksmith took and threw into the large

tub, which he filled with milk, and waited, hoping to see a young man make his appearance. He waited an hour, and then another, yet nothing came. He looked into the tub, but only saw all the bones swimming about on the surface, and those were burnt almost black.

The wife was getting rather impatient, so she sent one of her servants round to the smithy to ask,—

“Whether her husband would be ready soon?”

The unfortunate blacksmith could only say in reply that,—

“Her husband had wished her and all at home a long life, and asked them to remember his name.”

When the wife heard this, she knew that the blacksmith had burnt her husband to ashes, and had not made him young again. She flew into a great rage, and ordered her servants to run to the smithy, seize the blacksmith, and lead him to the gallows.

No sooner said than done. The servants ran into the smithy, caught hold of the unfortunate blacksmith, and dragged him to the gallows.

Just as they were on their way, who should overtake them but the young fellow who had lived with the blacksmith as workman—in other words, the devil.

“Whither are they taking you, master?” he asked.

“They want to hang me,” replied the blacksmith; and then he told the devil all that had happened.

“Well, uncle,” the evil spirit whispered, “I am no other than the painting of the devil on the smithy door, but as you treated me so shamefully I changed myself into a man, and vowed to pay you out. How-

ever, I will forgive you if you fall down on your knees and promise faithfully to treat me with the same respect that your father treated me before you. If you promise this, the husband of the old lady who is sending you to the gallows shall become alive and well again."

The blacksmith did not wait to be told twice ; anything would be better than being hung. So he fell down before the devil and stammered out his promise, saying that he would never again think of knocking him about with the hammer, but would from henceforth treat him with all possible respect and courtesy.

The devil then ran to the smithy, and very soon returned with the old gentleman, who had become youthful again.

"Stop!" cried the devil to the servants, who were about to hang the blacksmith. "Don't hang him! Here is your master for you!"

They at once untied the rope from around the blacksmith's neck, and set him free again to do what he pleased.

From that day forth the blacksmith never attempted or even thought of giving the devil on the door of the smithy a blow with his hammer, or otherwise ill-treating him, but he always greeted the painting with the greatest possible politeness, and lived on happily and prospered all his life ; but his workman disappeared, and was seen no more by any one.

The husband and wife, whom the devil had turned into young people again, lived on double their time, and were as rich and happy as ever, and I believe they are still alive if not dead !



### THE ROGUISH PEASANT.

ONCE upon a time there lived in a Russian village an old peasant woman who had two sons. One, however, died; and the other was from home, but was soon expected to return to his native village.

One evening, as the peasant woman was working in her little hut, a soldier walked in at the open door.

“Good-day, little mother!” he said. “Can I stay here the night?”

“Yes, certainly, with pleasure, little father. But whence come you, and who are you?”

“I am nobody in particular, little mother; I am an emigrant from the next world.”

“Ah! my precious soul! One of my sons died a little while ago. Did you happen to come across him?”

“Why, yes, of course! We lived in the same sphere.”

“No, really! You don’t mean it?”

“He feeds and looks after the young cranes in the next world.”

“Oh, my precious soul! But where did he get them?”

“Where did he get them! Why, the young cranes roam about among the sweet-briar!”

“How did he look? What clothes had he on?”

“Clothes! He was all in tatters, and a pair of wings.”

“Poor fellow! Well, I have got about forty yards of grey cloth and a ten-rouble note; take them, good man, and give them to my son.”

“With pleasure, little mother.”

Next morning the old woman gave the soldier the cloth and the money, and wished him a safe journey back; and also begged him to come again soon and tell her how her son was getting on.

She waited and waited for many a week, but the soldier did not return. At last the day arrived when her other son was expected home.

“How are you, mother mine?” he exclaimed, coming into the hut and embracing his mother. “Have you any news?”

“Yes, my boy. Not very long ago, an emigrant from the other world came to stay the night here, and he brought some news of your brother, for they both lived in the same sphere. But he said that the poor fellow had nothing but a pair of wings, so I gave him forty yards of cloth and ten roubles.”

“Good gracious, mother, you have given away everything we had; and for what? Just because that man was artful enough to tell you a lot of lies. It really is most astonishing how confiding some people are! I think I will go into the wide world and tell a lot of lies, and see whether, after cheating everybody, I become a very rich man or not. If I succeed, I shall come home again, and then we can live happily together, and have food and money in plenty ever after.”

Next day the son went off to try his luck.

He went on and on until he came to an estate belonging to a rich Russian *barin* or gentleman. He walked up to the lordly mansion, and saw, in a garden near the house, a large pig with a number of little ones walking about. A thought struck him, and he went down on his knees before the pigs, and began making most polite bows to them.

Now the mistress of the house, who was looking out of one of the windows, saw the performance, and was greatly amused.

"Go," she said to one of her maids, "and ask the mujik what he is bowing for."

The maid went up to the peasant, saying,—

"Little mujik, tell me why you are on your knees before the pigs, and why you are bowing to them? My lady has sent me to ask."

"Tell your mistress, my little dear, that yonder pig is my wife's sister, and my son is going to be married to-morrow, so I am asking her and her young ones to come to the wedding, that is all; and she has consented, on condition that your lady allows them. So go and ask your mistress whether she will let them come with me."

The girl burst out laughing, and went straight to her mistress, who also began laughing heartily when she heard all the peasant had said.

"What a donkey!" she cried. "Fancy asking the pigs to his son's wedding! Well, never mind, let all his friends have a good laugh at him. Yes, he may take the pigs; but first dress them up in my *shuba* (fur coat), and let the coachman get my own

little carriage and pair ready, so that the pigs need not go to the wedding on foot."

When the carriage was ready, they dressed the pig up in the lady's fur coat, and placed it in the carriage with the young ones, and gave the reins to the peasant, who at once rode away homewards.

Now the master of the house, who was away shooting at the time, returned home a few minutes after the peasant had left. His wife ran out to meet him, laughing.

"I am so glad you have returned, my dear!" she said; "as I am longing to have some one to laugh with. Such a funny thing happened while you were away. A peasant came here and began kneeling and bowing before our pigs. He declared that one of them was his wife's sister, and he was asking her and the little ones to come to his son's wedding!"

"Yes," the husband replied; "and did you let her go?"

"Of course I did. I even had the pig dressed in my best *shuba*, and had her put in my own little carriage and pair, and let the peasant drive it himself. I think it was nothing but right for me to do so, the peasant was so very polite to the pigs. What do you think, my dear?"

"What do *I* think? Well this—that the peasant was an ass, and you were another!"

And the good man—like the rest of his sex—thought it was a splendid opportunity for flying into a rage. He told his wife that she had been cheated, and then rushing out of the house, he flung himself upon his horse and galloped off after the peasant, who

when he heard that he was being pursued, conveyed the carriage and pair into a dark forest hard by, and then going back, took off his cap, seated himself near the entrance of the forest, put the cap beside him on the ground, and waited until the horseman came up to him.

“Hark you, little father!” cried the *barin*, “have you seen a peasant drive this way with a carriage and pair and a number of pigs in it?”

“See him? I should rather think I did! He rode past a long time ago.”

“In which direction did he drive? How had I better go? Do you think I am likely to overtake him?”

“Yes, you could overtake him, I daresay; but the way he went by has many a turning, and you are sure to lose yourself. Is the road quite unknown to you?”

“Yes, little brother. I think, if you don’t mind, it would be better for you to go in search of him and bring him back to me, for you seem to know the way so well!”

“No, brother, I could not possibly; for I have a falcon under my cap here and must watch it.”

“I can do that for you.”

“No, you are sure to let him out, and the bird is very valuable. Besides, if I lost it my master would never forgive me.”

“But how much is it worth?”

“Three hundred roubles, I should think.”

“Very well then, if I lose the bird I will pay the money.”

“No, brother, if you really want me to go after the peasant, you had better give me the money now, for

heaven knows what might happen afterwards ; you might lose the bird, and then take your departure too, and I should never see either the falcon or the money !”

“ Oh, you incredulous man ! Here take the three hundred roubles anyhow !”

The peasant took the money, and at the *barin's* wish mounted his horse and rode off into the forest, leaving the *barin* to watch over the empty cap.

He waited and waited ; but the peasant did not return, which he thought looked rather queer.

The sun began to set, still no peasant.

“ Stop !” thought the *barin*, “ let me look and see whether there really is a falcon under that cap. If there is, then the peasant may possibly return ; if not—well, then it is of no use waiting here and wasting my time.”

He peeped under the cap, but no falcon was to be seen.

“ Ah, the wretch !” he laughed ; “ I do believe that he was the very same man who cheated my wife out of her carriage and pair, her *shuba*, and the pigs.”

He spat on the ground three times with vexation, and returned home to his wife penitent.

Meanwhile our friend the peasant had long since got safely back to his mother with all his treasures.

“ Well, mother mine !” he cried, “ this world of ours can certainly boast of some very good natured fools. Just look, without any reason whatever, they gave me three horses, a carriage, three hundred roubles, and a pig with her little ones. Now we can live happily for some time at least, thanks to the stupidity of these people. It really is wonderful !”

### A HOAX.

A GOOD many years ago there came to the hut of an old peasant a soldier, who asked for a night's lodging.

"Come in, soldier, and welcome! Only you must tell me some stories all through the night, for you have been all over the world, I suppose, and have seen a great number of things and know so much."

"What am I to tell you, fiction or fact?"

"Something that has happened to yourself."

So the soldier began telling the peasant where he had been, how he had lived, and what he had seen and, after talking away for a long time he came to a stop, saying that he had nothing more of interest to tell. But the peasant was not satisfied, and declared that he would not sleep unless the soldier told him more tales.

The soldier thought and thought, and then it suddenly struck him that it would be rather fun to try and deceive the peasant somehow or another as he was rather good at that.

"Master, master!" he cried, "do you know what it is that is lying in the loft by your side?"

"Why, a soldier to be sure. What else?"

"No, you have not guessed right; feel with your hand!

The peasant did so, and it felt as if a wolf were lying by his side. He was greatly alarmed.

“Don’t be afraid of me,” said the soldier; “feel yourself, and you will find that you are very much the same sort of animal!”

The peasant obeyed, and felt the thick fur of a bear all round him.

“Now listen, master,” said the soldier; “we have no business to lie in the loft now; besides, when the people see us they will take us for real animals, and that would never do, we should be in great danger and that is just what we must avoid. Let us be off now so that no one may see us.”

So they got up and ran out of the hut into the fields and far away. Suddenly they came across an old horse which belonged to the peasant.

“Come, let us eat up that horse, for I am hungry!” said the wolf.

“No, please don’t, it is my horse!”

“Well, and what of that? Better let us eat it than starve.”

So they ate it and ran on farther. It was quite daylight when they came into another field, where they saw an old woman, the peasant’s wife, coming along.

“Come, my friend!” said the wolf, “let us eat up this old woman!”

“But she is my wife!” replied the bear.

“Your wife, indeed! What next?”

And they finished off the old woman also.

In this way the wolf and bear passed the whole summer, eating people or animals, whichever came



first. When the winter arrived, the wolf said to his companion,—

“Come, let us find a bear’s den in the forest yonder ; you can get into it first and hide, while I keep watch at the opening, so that should any hunters happen to see us, they would shoot me first. But mind, as soon as you see that they have killed me and begin stripping off my skin, you must at once run out of the den and jump over my skin. The moment you do that you will be changed into yourself—a man—again.”

They found a very suitable den in the forest, into which the bear went, while the wolf lay at the mouth.

They lay there for some time without anything happening to them. At last some hunters came riding along. When they saw the wolf they at once shot him, and then commenced tearing off his skin. At that moment the bear rushed out of his den, and with one leap tumbled right over the wolf’s skin and ran off as hard as ever he could, and——down came the peasant, head-over-heels, from his loft in his own hut.

“Oh dear! oh dear!” he cried ; “I have broken my back!”

“What is the matter with you, old man?” asked his wife from the top of the stove. “What made you fall off the loft just as if you had been drinking?”

“Oh, you don’t understand anything!” began the peasant. “You see the soldier and I changed into wild beasts ; he into a wolf, I into a bear, and so we ran about all through the summer and winter. We

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ate up our old horse, and we even ate you up also, old woman."

The woman was greatly astonished, and thought her husband was going mad, while the soldier burst out into a hearty laugh.

"What!" cried the peasant, stupefied with amazement; "what, soldier! do you mean to say that you are lying in the loft?"

"Of course, where else should I be? Do you really suppose that the hunters killed me? Oh, what a joke! Why, you old donkey, it was nothing but a hoax; I wanted to have a little fun out of you. While you were half-asleep I told the story, and you actually thought that it really was taking place. I have often done this sort of thing, and am always greatly amused at the result."

## THE WONDERFUL SAILOR.

IN a certain kingdom there lived a sailor, who had served his master, the king, well and faithfully. He was a steady-going, clean fellow, and a great favourite with the captain and all his superiors.

One day he asked leave to go on shore and enjoy himself about town. He let himself down from the ship—which lay at anchor—into a little boat; he rowed to shore. After walking about for some time, he entered a *traktir* or public-house, and, seating himself at a small table, ordered wine and eatables to be brought him; for he intended to enjoy himself thoroughly. He ate and drank, and refreshed himself, spending about ten roubles, and yet he was not satisfied, but kept on ordering more things.

“Look here, sailor!” said the waiter at last; “you are consuming a great deal, but have you the money to pay for everything?”

“Don’t be so very suspicious, my brother!” replied the sailor, taking out a gold piece from his pocket, much to the waiter’s amazement, as gold was a very rare thing to see. He threw it on the table, saying,—

“There, take the money, and be happy!”

The waiter took the gold, made up the account, and brought back the change.

“Oh, I don't want any of your stupid change, brother!” said the sailor, laughing. “Keep what remains for yourself for drink.”

Next day, after doing his work on board, the sailor again asked leave to go on shore. He went into the very same *traktir*, drinking as before, and paying with another gold piece. On the third day he did the same, and pretty nearly every day after, always paying with gold, but never asking for change, telling the waiter to keep what remained for himself for drink.

At last the *traktirshik*, or the public-house keeper, began to notice this, and thought it looked rather queer.

“What does it all mean?” he asked himself. “The sailor seems rather a good sort, but I cannot understand how it is that he manages to throw his money about like dirt. He seems to have found a whole casket-full of gold. I know how much pay the sailors get as a rule, so that they cannot possibly afford to throw money away. Most likely this sailor has found a hidden treasure somewhere. I think I had better go and inform his captain of this, for who knows, there might, after all, be something queer, and if I don't say anything about it, I may be sent to Siberia for receiving the money.”

So he went and told the captain, who at once had the sailor sent for and brought before him.

“Come and confess,” said he to the sailor, “from whence you got all the gold?”

“There is not much to confess, sir,” the sailor answered; “the gold which I had can be found in every blessed mud-hole.”

“That is a lie!”

“By no means; it is the real truth, your honour. The *traktirshik* tells the lies, not I; let him show you the gold which he received from me.”

The *traktirshik* then brought his cash-box, opened it, and what was his amazement to see that all the gold which the sailor had given him had turned into bones!

“How is this, brother?” said the *traktirshik*. “You paid me with gold, which has now turned into bones. Show us how you did this?”

“I had nothing to do with the changing of the gold, but I will explain everything to you to the best of my ability.” Then, addressing the captain, the sailor continued, “This, your honour, is a sign that death is approaching us, and that we shall all be flooded; the sea will rise higher and higher, and will swamp the town, and drown the inhabitants.”

“Good heavens!” cried the captain; “what are we to do? Whither shall we go?”

“Well, your honour,” said the sailor, “if you have no particular wish to get drowned, you had better follow me, and let us both climb up a chimney.”

They did so; and, getting on to the roof, they stood up, and, looking all around, saw the whole town submerged. It was such an overflow that some of the houses in the low-lying districts of the town were quite invisible, while the waters continued rising higher and higher.

“Well, little brother,” said the captain, “if the sea continues rising at this rate, I am very much afraid

that we shall not escape drowning. What do you think?"

"I don't know, your honour, what must be—will be."

"My death is now approaching," thought the captain to himself, and, falling down upon his knees, began to pray.

Suddenly a little boat came floating by, and stuck on the corner of the roof.

"Your honour," said the sailor, "get into the little boat as quickly as you can, and let us float away in it. We may escape, and be saved, after all. Perhaps the waters may subside in time."

They seated themselves in the little boat, and were driven along in it by the wind. They drifted away for two whole days, and on the third day the water began to subside, and very rapidly too; but where did it all go to? All round them dry land appeared. On drifted the little boat until it came to a full stop by the strand of an unknown country. The captain and his companion got out, and asked some of the inhabitants—who had evidently not been drowned—where they were, and how far they had drifted? and were greatly astonished to hear that they had arrived at the Twenty-seventh kingdom. What were they to do? How were they to get back to their own country? They had no money with them, not a penny; they could do nothing.

"We must become workmen," said the sailor, "and earn our money, for without money we need not think of living at all. As for returning to our own country, that is quite impossible."

“ It is all very well for you, little brother, to talk of working. You are used to that sort of thing ; but I, as you yourself know, am a captain in the king’s service, and am not accustomed to labour.”

“ Never mind, your honour ; I shall find you something which will not prove so very difficult.”

They went into the village, and hired themselves out as shepherds ; the sailor passing himself off as a real shepherd, and the captain as only his man. Thus they worked on through the whole summer, looking after the village cattle, and in the autumn they went and collected their money from the peasants, after which the sailor began dividing it between them, giving the captain half, and keeping the other half for himself. But the captain, when he saw that the sailor divided the money equally, was offended at being put on a level with a common sailor.

“ Why do you put me on an equality with yourself ? ” he asked. “ Do you not know that I am a captain, while you are only a—common sailor ? ”

“ Yes, I know ! I ought to divide the money into three parts, keeping two for myself, and giving you the third ; for I was a real shepherd, and worked hard, while you were only—my helper, and did not do much ! ”

The captain became very angry, and began scolding the sailor, who seemed to be growing stronger and stronger, and did not care what the captain was saying. Then he suddenly waved his hand, and struck the captain in the side. The captain jumped up and—awoke ! He looked around him—everything

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was just as it always had been ; he was in his own room in his comfortable arm-chair, for he had never left it ; but while the sailor and *traktirshik* were explaining everything he had fallen asleep. He now did not wish to judge the sailor any more, but only told him to leave his presence, while the *traktirshik* went back without getting any satisfaction.



## SENKA THE LITTLE.

MANY years ago, in a certain kingdom, there was a small village, in which lived a man whose brother had died a little while before, leaving behind him a son called Senka the Little, who was an arrant thief. Though his father had placed him in many a school and many a place of business, Senka would learn and do nothing.

“Why do you not try and learn?” his father and mother would ask him. “Do you wish to remain a fool all your life?”

“If you wish to see me earn my bread and salt,” Senka would reply; “you must let me go somewhere to learn the art of theft properly. I will look at no other science. I shall do nothing but steal; I have no talent for anything else.”

So Senka the Little stayed at home doing nothing until his father died, and then he did not stop to think, but went straight to his uncle, his father’s brother, saying,—

“Come, uncle, I want to learn the art of theft now. While you do the stealing, I will look on and see how you do it, and also help you when necessary.”

“All right, come along!” said the uncle; and they started off on their journey.

They went on and on until they came to a marshy

place, where they saw a wild duck sitting among some reeds, where she had made herself a nest.

"Let us catch that duck!" said the uncle, as he began to creep stealthily up to her. But he did not succeed; he had driven her off her nest in vain. Meanwhile Senka the Little crept on behind his uncle, and contrived to cut off the soles of that worthy's shoes unobserved.

"Well, Senka," laughed the uncle, when he found what his nephew had done, "I thought I was cunning enough, but you beat me out and out."

They went on farther, and very soon saw in the distance three *mujiks* coming along towards them, leading a bull to market.

"How can we best get that bull, little uncle?" asked Senka.

"Why, you stupid, it is not night? How can any one steal so large a thing in broad daylight?"

"Never mind, uncle, I intend to do it, be it night or day."

"What!" exclaimed the uncle. "Do you actually think that you can be more clever and cunning than I."

"Well, we shall see."

Senka the Little then took off his right boot, and, throwing it into the middle of the road, hid himself and his uncle behind some bushes on the road-side.

The *mujiks* came up.

"Stop, my brothers!" cried one. "Look here! What a splendid boot this is; quite new, too."

"Yes, it's new enough; but what can we do with it? If there had been a pair of them it would have

been different ; we might have taken them. But what is the use of one ? You can't walk about with one leg in a boot and the other in a straw shoe."

They thought, and hesitated, and at last walked away, leaving the boot in the road. Senka at once rushed forward, drew on the boot, and then, pulling off the left one, he ran as hard as ever he could behind the bushes until he got some yards in front of the *mujiks*. He then stopped, and threw the left boot into the road, so that the men could not see what he had done.

"Stop, brothers!" cried one of the *mujiks*, coming up to the boot. "Here is the other boot! Either the man who lost them was a great idiot, or else he had so many boots that he did not mind losing a pair or so. Now, brothers, for a race! Let us all three run back to the place where we left the other boot, and whoever gets there first shall have them for himself."

They tied the bull up to a tree, and then ran back after the other boot. This was just what Senka the Little had expected ; so he rushed out from behind the bushes, put on the boot—which the *mujiks* had left behind them—and then, untying the bull, drove it on to a marsh, where he cut off its head, and placed it in such a way that any one might have thought that the bull had sunk into the damp ground. This done, he hid the other part of the animal behind the bushes, and waited.

When the *mujiks* found that their running had all been in vain, and that the first boot had disappeared, they returned to the place where they had left the bull ; but what was their surprise to find that the

animal was not there. They looked and looked, and at last came to the marsh, where they found the head looking out of the ground.

"Just see where the devil has enticed him to!" said one of the men, pointing at the head. "The animal has sunk right into the mud. We must try our best to pull him out."

They had some very thick ropes with them, so they took one, and threw it round the bull's horns. They then all three set to work to pull the rope. They had hardly given one little pull when down they all went on their backs.

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed the men, getting up, and seeing the head without the body. "The bull was evidently very deep in the mud, for, see, we have only succeeded in tearing off his head."

However, nothing was to be done ; so the *mujiks* went home empty-handed.

As soon as they had gone Senka the Little called his uncle, and they both skinned the bull, cut the flesh up, and then began to divide it between them.

"Are we to divide the body equally?" asked the uncle. "I think I ought to have more than you, Senka, for I am older than you."

But Senka was offended. He snatched up the bull's skin, and left his uncle. He went behind some bushes, and, taking two rather thick branches, began thrashing and thrashing the skin, crying out meanwhile at the top of his voice,—

"Let me go! let me go, little father! It was not I alone who stole the bull; my uncle helped me."

When the uncle heard this he thought to himself

"Well, Senka is catching it now," and ran home in a fright, thinking that he might catch it also.

The moment his uncle had gone, Senka ran to the village for a horse and cart, and placing all the meat in the vehicle, drove off to market, where he sold it, and got a great deal of money for it.

Next day Senka the Little came to his uncle, and asked him to accompany him to the king's treasury.

"Come," he said, "let us go on with our lesson! You steal, while I watch and see how you do it."

Away they went in the middle of the night, and arrived at the king's treasury; but how were they to get in, for there were watchmen all round? They must try and be artful again. Senka the Little managed, somehow or another, to creep into a dark corner unobserved, followed by his uncle. In this way they got into the treasury without any trouble of any kind, and at once began filling their pockets. It would be perfectly impossible to say how much gold and silver they contrived to take home with them. This sort of thing rather amused them; they liked it, especially Senka, who went every night into the treasury and stole the money.

One day the king went in to see whether all was right in the royal treasury, and of course saw at once that something was wrong. A great deal of his money was missing, and he immediately called a council, and asked what had better be done—how they could best catch the thief or thieves. At last they decided to put a very large vat filled with tar just by the hole through which the thief must have

entered. No sooner said than done. All day long they heated the tar, and kept pouring it into a very large vat.

In the evening Senka the Little called for his uncle, and they both went to the treasury, as usual. When they reached their destination, Senka the Little sent his uncle on in front.

"Go on first," he said, "and I shall follow."

The unfortunate uncle obeyed; he crawled through the hole and tumbled right into the vat of hot tar.

"Good heavens!" he yelled at the top of his voice, "my death has come to me at last. I am right in the middle of a hot bath of tar."

Senka at once seized his relative by the legs, thinking he would be able to pull him out; but no. He pulled and pulled, but all in vain; nothing could be done. "Well," he said, to himself, "if they find him here they will see his face, and, by the help of that, are sure to find me, for there is a strong likeness between us."

So saying, Senka unscrewed his uncle's head, and took it home to his aunt, to whom he told a long story of how her husband had been lost, and that nothing but his head was left in remembrance.

In the morning the guards came to the king, and told him that the thief had been caught, but he was headless. The king was greatly astonished, and ordered a cart, with three horses and little bells, to be got ready to drive the dead body about all over the town: in that way they might perhaps be able to find some of the man's relations. If any one was seen to weep over the dead body, the same should at once

be seized and put into fetters ; those were the king's orders.

"Little aunt," said Senka, "do you want to weep over the body of your departed husband?"

"Of course I should, my dear. A husband is a husband, you know, whatever he may do or say. Yes, I should very much like to weep over him."

"Well, then, listen to me. Take a new pitcher, fill it with milk, and go out into the streets to meet the cart with the dead body of your husband. When you see it, manage to stumble somehow, drop the pitcher so that it will smash, and then cry to your heart's content."

The aunt took a new pitcher, filled it with milk, and went her way. She did not go far before she saw the cart with the three horses, and her dead husband lying on it. As soon as the vehicle came up to her she managed to stumble, and drop the pitcher, which broke into several little pieces, while the milk flowed out in all directions. She at once commenced to weep bitterly, and murmuring to herself,—

"Oh, my life! my life! How can I ever live without thee?"

In another moment a number of soldiers came running up to her from all sides, and began asking her,—

"Tell us, you old woman, what are you crying for and why are you saying those words? Have you recognized the dead body? Is he your husband, or your brother, or—your lover?"

"Ah! my dear little fathers, how can I help crying? You see yourselves in what trouble I am; I have

broken my new pitcher and spilt the milk!" And she again began to cry.

"What an old idiot! You must have very little to cry about in general!" said the soldiers, and went on farther.

On the following day the soldiers came to the king, telling him that they had seen no one cry over the dead body, though they had driven all over the town. The only person who did weep was a stupid old woman; but that was not at sight of the body, but because she happened to smash her pitcher and spill the milk.

"Why did you not seize her?" asked the king. "I dare say she did know something about the thief."

The king again called a council, and began asking how they had best catch the other thief, for he was sure that there had been another. At last, after thinking and thinking, the council decided to place a cask of wine in a certain meadow, strew some money round it, and put a man behind the bushes to watch. The thief, of course, would at once come to steal the money—how could he help it? He would then see the cask, and immediately drink the wine until he became drunk; then it would be very easy to catch him!

In the night Senka the Little started off to see what he could do in the way of stealing. He had to pass through the meadow, where, to his surprise, he saw some money strewn about. He at once began filling his pockets, when he smelt the wine.

"Come," he thought, "this is splendid. Let me taste the wine."



He did. It was beautiful; he had never tasted better.

“A drop more won't hurt.”

He drank and drank until he became so drunk that he was unable to leave his place, but fell fast asleep by the side of the cask. The watchman meanwhile had long since noticed him.

“Ah! my friend,” he thought, “you are caught now! This is the end of your amusements in this world; you will soon be sitting in Siberia!”

He approached Senka the Little and shaved off half of his beard, so that in case the thief left the place while he went to tell the authorities there would be something to recognize him by.

“I shall go now and tell them.”

By the time the watchman arrived at the palace morning began to dawn, and Senka awoke and recovered from his fit of intoxication, and pulled his beard as he yawned, when he suddenly felt that half of it was gone. “What was he to do?” he thought and thought.

At last an idea struck him. He got up, and went along the high road, and commenced pulling every man he met by the beard until he tore half of it off, so that no one could possibly recognize the thief! In this way Senka got out of his difficulty. He let his beard grow again, and began living happily, stealing right and left. He would have lived even longer, if he had not been caught the other day and hung.

## ELIE MUROMITCH.

*(Adapted from a Russian Ballad.)*

NEAR the splendid town of Murom was a small village called Karatchaev, in which lived a peasant by name Ivan Timofeivitch, who had a favourite son, Elie Muromitch. Now this son was unable to walk ; he had not moved from his chair for thirty long years.

Harvest-time had come, and all the peasants had gone off into the fields to work ; Elie alone stayed at home. As he sat in his chair by the open window, two cripples came limping along the road ; they stopped in front of the window, and began begging for something to eat and drink.

“Walk into the hut, my poor brothers !” answered Elie ; “there is plenty to eat and drink here, but no one to give it you.”

But the beggars replied,—

“No, get up and fetch the things for us yourself.”

“I cannot walk, I have no strength in my legs ; I have sat in this chair for thirty years, unable to move or do anything.”

Still the beggars only said,—

“Never mind ; get up, and fetch the things !”

Elie suddenly felt his strength returning, but he could not rise.

"It is of no use," replied Elie ; "I certainly do feel strong all at once, but I cannot get up. I have no power in my legs."

"Try again," said the beggars for the third time.

Elie felt stronger and stronger ; he raised himself from his chair, and—actually stood on his feet, and managed to walk.

"Go!" said the beggars to him, "fetch us some beer, for we are thirsty."

Elie felt so strong now that it was nothing to him to go down into the deep dark cellar and pour out two bowls full of frothy beer, and take them up to the beggars, who had so generously given him back his strength.

"Drink it yourself!" said they to him, when he brought them the beer.

Elie seized both bowls, and drank off the contents at a draught!

"Go down and fetch more beer and give it to us," said the beggars again.

Elie once more descended into the cellar, this time bringing forth beer in larger bowls ; but the beggars only said as before,—

"Drink it yourself!"

Elie obeyed.

"Well, Elie," said the men, "do you feel your strength?"

"I do."

"Do you feel *very* strong?"

"Yes, very!"

"How strong?"

"As strong as a post from here to heaven."

I feel as though I could turn the whole earth round !”

At this the two men shook their heads, and began talking to each other.

“ We have given Elie too much power,” they said ; “ it will never do for him to turn the earth round ! No, no ; we must reduce his strength !” Then turning to him, they said aloud : “ Go fetch us some beer ; we are thirsty !”

Elie sprang into the cellar, and brought up more beer than before.

“ Drink it yourself !” they said.

He drank it.

“ Well, Elie, do you feel just as strong ?” they asked.

“ No, my strength seems to have been reduced !”

“ That will do,” said the men to each other ; “ let us go !” And they left Elie Muromitch to himself.

When the parents returned home from the fields, and saw their beloved son walking about the hut, trying his strength in various ways, they were amazed. What could have come over their favourite in their absence ? What had happened to their dear son, Elie Muromitch ? They had never for a moment expected to see him up and about, looking stronger than the mightiest warrior !

After a little while, an idea struck Elie Muromitch. He dressed himself up like a warrior, made himself a tremendous lance of steel, harnessed his beautiful horse, and went to his parents, asking them to bless him.

“ My good father and mother,” he said, “ listen, I

pray you, to what I am about to say. It has just struck me that it would be a grand thing to go to the sacred city of Kiev, and offer up thanksgivings to the Saints for their great kindness to me, and also to salute our well-beloved warrior, Prince Vladimir !”

His father and mother looked very sad indeed when they heard this ; the idea of parting with their beloved son, even for a short time, was painful to them.

“ Why must you leave us in our old age ? ” they said, their eyes dim with tears. “ Why do you wish to forsake us, our darling son ? ”

Still Elie Muromitch begged and prayed them to bless him, and let him go. The parents at last consented ; they gave him as great a blessing as they could, thus advising him at the same time,—

“ Go, beloved son, straight to the sacred city of Kiev ; but take care, and do not unnecessarily or unjustly offend any one on your way, or unreasonably shed Christian blood.”

Elie Muromitch accepted the blessing, and promised to keep and follow the advice.

Out of the splendid town of Murom, out of the village of Karatchaev, rode our valiant hero, Elie Muromitch, magnificently attired, on his way to the sacred city of Kiev.

Now this journey to Kiev, from the town of Murom, was a very dangerous one, for after having gone through the wonderful town of Chernigov, which was on the way, there lay a straight road that had for the last thirty years or so been impassable, on account of a celebrated robber, Nightingale

Thief as he was called, because he killed everybody who happened to venture down that road by his whistling; he allowed no one to pass, whether on horseback or on foot; he killed them all! not by force, but by his extraordinary art!

On, on rode Elie Muromitch, until he came into an open field, where he discovered traces of some passing horsemen; he set spurs to his horse and followed up the track. The creature neighed angrily and began galloping along, covering four miles at a gallop! At this rate Elie soon reached the dark Brynske forests, on the black earth of Smolensk, near the River Smorodina. He slackened his horse's pace, and began bragging aloud of all the brave deeds he intended to do.

"If I am fortunate enough to arrive safely at the sacred city of Kiev, I shall kill every Tartar in the place, and take all the Tartar women prisoners!"

He rode on, faster than before, and reached another field, where he suddenly came upon a band of forty-four thieves bent on plunder.

"Hail to you! ye villains!" exclaimed Elie Muromitch. "What care I for you forty-four thieves. There is nothing that ye dare take from me. I have a great-coat, and that is a grey one, the price of which is sixty roubles. I have a quiver at my back, as you see, which contains five hundred arrows, and the price of these arrows is five roubles each. As for ready money—I have forty thousand roubles with me; while the beast I am riding on—is worth more than all put together!"

The robbers laughed outright.

“Though we have been pretty nearly all over the wide world,” said they, “we have never, to our knowledge, come across such a fool before. Come, strip him, children ; let us see whether the big fool speaks the truth.”

Elie Muromitch suddenly seized his bow, and taking an arrow from the quiver, he aimed at an old oak-tree ; the arrow pierced it through the middle, and the big old oak fell with a tremendous crash, breaking in four quarters. No sooner had the robbers seen what had happened than they became alarmed, and mounting their horses they galloped off in all directions.

Elie Muromitch laughed to himself, and rode on farther, through different portions of the Brynske forests, until he arrived at the wonderful town of Chernigov. When he entered this town he found it in the possession of a force of Mussulmen, who wanted to plunder it, to pull down its walls, to destroy its religious houses, to burn its churches, and to take all its generals and the Prince of Chernigov prisoners.

Elie Muromitch felt sorry for the town of Chernigov, and he determined to beat the Mussulman forces and drive them out.

So he galloped up, and with the sharp point of his lance he pierced their jerkins through and through, and flourishing his sword he slaughtered them, right and left, so that by nightfall Elie Muromitch had succeeded in destroying the whole of the Mussulman force and taking their king prisoner. He took the Mussulman king and walked him all round the wonderful town of Chernigov. The prince, with all

the generals, and the people both great and small, came forward to meet him, bringing with them bread and salt, and taking the young hero by the hands welcomed him to the town of Chernigov, and treated him with the greatest possible respect.

On the following day Elie Muromitch left the wonderful town of Chernigov, and rode along the black earth of Smolensk, towards the sacred city of Kiev. On, on he rode until he came to a dark and dreary forest, far more gloomy than the others, in which lay the impassable road. Along this dangerous path Elie Muromitch the valiant hero rode; he approached a cluster of nine old oak-trees, in the midst of which the celebrated robber, the Nightingale Thief had built his hut, or nest, as it was called. When the Nightingale Thief heard the trampling of horse's hoofs, he at once commenced whistling; first he imitated the sound of the nightingale, then he hissed like a serpent, and lastly roared like a wild bull.

When Elie's horse heard all these sounds, he began to stumble and grow nervous; he tried to turn back, but his rider whipped him on, but on reaching the Nightingale Thief's nest the animal fell on his knees.

"Oh! you son of a wolf!" exclaimed Elie Muromitch. "You bag full of grass! Have you not been into white-walled caverns? Have you not ridden through dark and dreary forests? Have you never before heard the singing of a nightingale, the hissing of a serpent, or the roar of a wild bull?"

Still the horse would not move. The Nightingale



Thief again gave a loud roar, like a wild bull, so loud that the whole forest shook ; the thief was determined to kill Elie Muromitch by his whistling.

Disregarding his parents' advice, Elie Muromitch drew out an arrow from the quiver, and adjusting it to the bow, let fly right into the midst of the nine oaks, and struck the Nightingale Thief in the right eye ; from the effects of this wound the thief fell all of a heap on the ground. Elie seized him, and tying him to his saddle-bow, he sprang on to his horse and dragged the thief through his former place of shelter, all along the road which had for the last thirty years been impassable, and so arrived at the sacred city of Kiev.

Elie galloped straight into the prince's court, jumped off his noble steed, and tied him up to an old oak-post ; this done, he went up to the sacred palace of the prince to pray, and after having offered up thanks for his recovery, he made a low bow to the prince and princess.

Now the great Prince Vladimir was holding a feast ; there were princes and grand nobles present, and many a valiant warrior. When Elie Muromitch had finished praying, a mighty bowl large as a modern pail was handed to him, full of green wine. Elie took the bowl, and raising it to his lips drank off the contents at one draught.

Then up rose the great Prince Vladimir and spoke, for he and his people were greatly amazed,—

“Tell me thy name, young stranger ; tell me thy father's name, that we may know what seat to give thee.”

“You flatter me, great Prince Vladimir,” Elie Muromitch replied. “They call me Elie Muromitch, the son of Ivanovitch. I travelled by the impassable road from the village of Karatchaev, through the splendid town of Murom—”

But here the valiant warriors interrupted Elie, and addressing the great prince, said,—

“O, kinsman of the sun, Prince Vladimir! What folly does this stranger speak? How could he possibly have ridden through the impassable road? None of us, valiant warriors though we be, would ever have dared so dangerous a deed. No one who ventured on that fatal road was ever heard of after; the road has been impassable for the last thirty years, on account of the Nightingale Thief, who has taken shelter there.”

“Lo! prince, behold!” Elie Muromitch said. “See what my valiant arm has done; there, in yonder court, you will find the famous Nightingale Thief.”

Prince Vladimir followed Elie Muromitch into the broad magnificent court to see the prisoner. Elie approached the Nightingale Thief, and whispered to him,—

“Listen and obey! Whistle as before, singing like a nightingale, hissing like a serpent, and roaring like a wild bull; and delight the great Prince Vladimir.”

The thief whistled, imitating the singing of the nightingale, stunning and deafening all the prince's chiefs and warriors in Kiev. Then he hissed like a serpent and roared like a wild bull, till the inhabitants of the sacred city fled in all directions, filling the air with lamentations, while the horses

galloped about all over the city, neighing furiously. Even the great Prince Vladimir and the beautiful Princess Aprasievna were more dead than alive.

“Hail to thee, Elie Muromitch, son of Ivanovitch !” said the prince coaxingly. “I beseech thee to remove that Nightingale Thief, for we do not want him here any longer ; we have had enough of this sport.”

Elie Muromitch seized the Nightingale Thief by his curly black locks, dashed him about on mother earth, then he threw him up into the air, higher than the tallest towers of the sacred palace, and the fragments as they fell were crushed against the stones. After this treatment, death was not long in coming to the thief.

As for Elie Muromitch, he was very handsomely rewarded, and went home through the splendid town of Murom, to his native village of Karatchaev, rich in gifts, and as happy as the day was long, and there he lived in luxury until he died.

### THE KING OF THE SEA, AND MELANIA THE CLEVER.

ONCE upon a time there lived a king and a queen. The king was a great sportsman, he loved nothing so much as to go out shooting game. One day, as he set out on one of his sporting expeditions, he saw a young eagle sitting on an old oak-tree; he was just about to shoot it, when to his surprise, the eagle said,—

“Do not shoot me, O king; but take me to your palace. I may be of use to you one of these days.”

The king thought and thought, and then replied,—

“Of what use can you possibly be to me?” and he again prepared to shoot the bird.

“No, pray do not kill me,” said the eagle once more; “take me home to your palace, O king, for I am sure to be of some use to you soon.”

The king thought for a little while, and then again was about to kill the eagle, wondering how on earth such a bird could be of use to him.

But the eagle begged for the third time, saying as before,—

“Kill me not, O king; better take me with you to the palace. I may be of use to you soon.”

The king at last took pity on the creature, and rode with it to his home, where he fed and took care of him for two whole years. The eagle ate so much

that the king very soon had no sheep or oxen left in his fields.

“Give me my freedom now,” said the eagle to the king.

The king gave him his liberty, and the bird tried to fly; but his wings had not become equal to the task of carrying such a heavy bird, so he said to the king,—

“Now, O king, you have fed me for two years; feed me yet another, it would be no great addition to what I have already cost.”

The king did so; he took cattle wherever he possibly could, and after feeding the eagle for another whole year, he gave him his liberty again.

The eagle soared high, high into the air, and after flying about a long time, he flew down upon the earth once more, and entering the palace, he said to the king,—

“Come, O king! Sit on my back, and let us fly into the wide world together.”

“Certainly,” said the king, seating himself upon the eagle’s back.

On, on they flew for a long, long time, until they came to the shores of the dark blue sea. Here the eagle threw the king off his back and let him fall into the water. However, he only sank to his knees in the waves, for the eagle did not allow him time enough to sink any deeper; he flew down upon him, and placing him on his wings again, soared away once more.

“I suppose you were sadly frightened just now O king?” said the bird.

“ I was, indeed,” the king replied ; “ I really thought I should drown.”

Away they flew over stock and stone until they came to another blue sea, where the eagle again let the king drop. When he was up to his waist in water, the eagle flew down and saved him again.

“ Were you frightened, O king ? ” asked the eagle.

“ Yes, but still I thought you would save me.”

Away they flew, till they came to a third blue sea ; here again the eagle let the king fall into the waves, but when he was up to his neck in water the bird saved him and put him on his wings, asking as before,—

“ Were you not frightened, O king ? ”

“ I was, but I thought that you would most likely pull me out again.”

“ Well, king, you know now what it is to be afraid of death. I threw you into the sea, in return for something which you wished to do to me, a long, long time ago. Do you remember the day when I sat on the old oak-tree and you wanted to shoot me ? Three times you intended to do so, but I begged of you to spare me, and thought to myself, perhaps he may destroy me, or perhaps he will befriend me and take me home with him.”

After that they flew on farther until they came to the Twenty-seventh kingdom ; then the eagle said to the king,—

“ Look and see, O king, what is above us and what beneath us ? ” The king obeyed.

“ Above us,” said he, “ are the heavens, beneath us the earth.”

“Look again; see what is on our right and what on our left.”

“On our right is a green field, on our left stands a house.”

“Let us fly down to that house,” replied the eagle, “for in it lives my youngest sister.”

So down they flew right into the yard of the house. The eagle's sister at once rushed out to meet her brother; she embraced him most affectionately, and took him into her little house and brought forward all kinds of good things, but she did not so much as look at the unfortunate king, who was left out in the yard with the dogs. But when the eagle saw what his sister had done, he was very angry; and scolding her severely for her rudeness, he left the hut and would touch nothing. He caught up the king and flew away with him.

On, on they went. At last the eagle said,—

“Look round, O king, and see what is behind us.”

The king looked. “I see a red house behind us,” he said.

“That is my sister's house on fire; it is a punishment to her because she did not ask you in, but left you outside with the dogs.”

Away they flew, farther and farther. At last the eagle said,—

“Look and see what is above us and what beneath.”

“Above us are the heavens, beneath us the earth.”

“Now, look again, and see what is on our right, and what on our left.”

"On our right are green fields, on our left stands a house."

"In that house lives my second sister; let us fly down and visit her."

Down they flew into the yard where the second sister came forward to greet her brother, and took him into her little house to give him some food, leaving the king out in the yard with her dogs, as her youngest sister had done. The eagle, however, was very angry, and springing from the table, caught up the king and flew away with him.

They flew and flew, farther and farther. At last the eagle said as before, "Look behind you, O king! and see what is there?"

The king turned round.

"I see another red house."

"That is the house of my second sister. I set it on fire as a punishment to her for not taking you in. Now let us fly to the house of my mother and my eldest sister."

On they went until they reached the house, and the eagle's mother and eldest sister rushed out to meet them; here the king found a warm and hearty welcome.

"Now, O king!" said the eagle, "you must stay with us for a while and rest, and when you are rested I shall give you a ship to take you home in; thus will I repay you for your kindness to me while I was at your palace."

So when the king was about to leave, the eagle gave him a beautiful ship, and two little boxes: one red and the other green.



"Listen," said the eagle, "and do not open the boxes until you reach home; the red box you must open in the fields behind the palace, and the green one you must open in the front of the palace."

The king took the boxes, parted from his friend the eagle, and sailed away over the blue seas. At last he arrived at some kind of an island, where he anchored his ship, and jumped on to the shore. He suddenly remembered the little boxes, and began wondering what there could be inside, and why he was not to open them. He thought and thought, and at last, not being able to stand it any longer, he took hold of the little red box, put it on the ground, and—opened it. Hardly had he done so, when out came a number of all kinds of cattle, till the whole island was swarming! When the king saw this he was greatly alarmed and began to cry.

"What on earth am I to do?" he said aloud to himself. "How can I possibly put all these cattle back into such a little box?"

At that moment he beheld a man come out of the waves.

"What is the matter, great king?" asked the man. "Why do you weep so bitterly?"

"How can I help it?" returned the king. "How am I to collect all these immense beasts, and put them into such a small box?"

"I think I can help you out of your trouble, and collect the cattle for you; but on one condition, and that is, that you give me something of which you know nothing, but which you have at home."

The king was astonished

“What have I got in my palace,” he thought, “of which I know nothing? I thought I knew everything that I possess!” However he consented, and said aloud: “All right, collect the cattle for me, and I will give you *the something* of which I know *nothing*.”

The man immediately set to work and put all the cattle back into the little red box; the king thanked him, and getting into his ship with the boxes, sailed homewards.

When he arrived home, he found that a little prince had been born, a dear, pretty little fellow; he took the child in his arms and kissed it long and tenderly, but weeping bitterly all the time.

“Why do you weep so bitterly, O king?” asked the queen.

“I weep for you,” the king replied; for he was afraid to tell his wife the real truth—that he had to give the little prince away. He then left the room, and taking the small red box he went to the field behind the palace and opened it. Out came a number of immense bulls, cows, sheep and lambs; so many were they, that the fields for miles round were filled with them! This done the king went to the grounds in front of the palace, opened the little green box—and suddenly he beheld a large and beautiful garden all round him! There was every possible kind of tree in it, and all the most lovely flowers imaginable! The king was so delighted that he quite forgot his promise to the man of the sea, and did not give his little son away.

Many, many years went by; when one day the

king thought he would have a stroll by the river-side, so he went. He had not been there long when out of the water appeared the very same man whom he had seen on the island, and who had helped him out of his trouble.

“Well, king!” said the man, “you have grown very forgetful! Don’t you remember that you promised me something, but have not fulfilled your promise?”

The king sighed, and going home told his wife and son the whole truth.

They talked and wept, but nothing was to be done; they had to part with the prince whether they liked it or not, so they took him to the river-side and left him there.

As soon as the young prince was left to himself he looked around him and beheld a little foot-path; he walked along it, wondering where it would bring him to. On, on he went until he found himself in a dark and dreary forest, where he saw a little hut in which lived an old fairy.

“I think I might as well go in,” he thought, and entered.

“Good-day to you, my prince!” said the old fairy. “What brings you here? Have you come on business or only for pleasure?”

“Oh, never mind, old lady! Give me something to eat and drink first, and then ask me as many questions as you like!”

She did so, and then the prince told her everything, and asked how he had best get to this man of the sea.

“Go, my child, to the dark blue sea,” answered the

old fairy, "and towards evening you will see twelve spoon-bills fly down on to the shore, but the moment they touch the ground they will be changed into twelve beautiful maidens, and will commence to bathe in the sea. Now the moment you see that they are not looking you must crawl out of your hiding-place and steal the garments of the eldest of the twelve damsels. When you have settled everything with her—for she will begin begging you to give her clothes back to her—you must go on to the King of the Sea. On your way to his dwelling you will meet with three old heroes—Eat-All, Drink-All and Chill-All. You must take them all with you, for they will be of great use to you."

The young prince thanked the old fairy and went his way to the blue sea, and hiding himself behind some bushes, waited.

Towards evening down flew twelve spoon-bills, which on touching the ground changed into twelve beautiful maidens who began bathing. When they were not looking the young prince crawled from behind the bushes, stole the garments of the eldest, and then hid himself again.

When the maidens had finished bathing, they climbed back on to the shore. The eleven put on their garments, changed themselves into birds again, and flew home; leaving their eldest sister—who was called Melania the Clever—by herself. When Melania caught sight of the young prince, she fell on her knees, begging and praying him to give her back her clothes.

"Give them back to me, I beseech you; for when

you arrive at the dwelling of my father—the King of the Sea—I may prove of great use to you.”

The prince gave her back her things ; she immediately changed into a spoon-bill and flew away after her sisters.

The prince walked on and on, until he met the three great heroes—Eat-All, Drink-All, and Chill-All. He stopped them, and asked them to accompany him to the dwelling of the King of the Sea.

When they arrived at the wonderful palace, the King of the Sea saw the young prince and exclaimed, “How are you, my friend? So you have come at last. Why did you not visit me sooner? I grew quite tired of waiting for you; but now that you are here, you must work. The first thing you must do is this: you must build a crystal bridge over the sea in one night, so that it may be quite ready by the morning. If not—your head shall be cut off!”

The young prince left the presence of the Sea King, and began to weep. Just then Melania the Clever threw open her window, and asked,—

“Why do you weep, my prince?”

“Ah, Melania the Clever! how can I help it? Your father has ordered me to build a crystal bridge over the sea in one night, and I don’t even know how to handle tools.”

“Never mind! Go to bed and sleep; morning is wiser than the evening!”<sup>1</sup>

The young prince took her advice and went to bed, while Melania herself came out of her little chamber, changed into a spoon-bill, and began whistling like a

<sup>1</sup> A Russian proverb.

boy ! Suddenly from every side little carpenters and masons came running up to her, and at her command set to work, first to measure, then to build ; and very soon the bridge was ready, ornamented with jewels and precious stones.

Early in the morning Melania the Clever woke the young prince.

“Get up, my prince!” she said ; “the bridge is ready. My father will be up soon to look at it.”

The prince got up, took a broom, and, going to the bridge, began to sweep here and there, so that the king should think he was giving the finishing touches.

The King of the Sea was delighted, and began flattering the young prince.

“I am very glad,” he said, “that you have obeyed my order ; now I will give you something else to do. I want you to make me a large and beautiful garden, with every possible kind of singing bird in it, with all the most lovely flowers imaginable growing on all the trees, and with plenty of pears, apples and all sorts of delicious ripe fruits hanging in all directions !”

The prince again left the king’s presence, crying as before.

“What are you weeping about now, my prince?” asked Melania the Clever, opening her window.

“How can I help it? Your father has ordered me to make the most extraordinary garden I ever heard of, all in one night, with all the most beautiful things I can think of in it”

“Never mind; don’t trouble yourself about it, but go to bed and to sleep; the morning is wiser than the evening.”

The prince obeyed, while Melania went out as before, and began whistling. Suddenly a number of little gardeners came running from all directions, and set to work to make a very lovely garden, in which they put all the most beautiful singing birds on every tree, flowers of every description, and pears and apples and all kinds of ripe fruit.

In the morning early, Melania the Clever woke up the young prince, saying,—

“Get up, my prince; the garden is quite ready. Make haste, for the king my father is going early to look at it.”

The young prince seized the broom, and rushing out into the garden, commenced sweeping the paths.

The king was delighted and flattered him.

“I am more pleased with your work than I can say, young prince, and as a reward for what you have done, you may choose one of my twelve daughters to be your bride. But I shall make them look all alike; the same faces, the same hair, and the same dresses, and if you succeed in choosing the same one three times running, you shall have that one for your bride; if not, I shall have you severely punished.”

When Melania the Clever heard this, she said to the young prince, “The first time I will wave my handkerchief, the second time I will smooth down my dress, and on the third time a little fly will buzz around me, so you will know which I am.”

Thus the young prince managed successfully to choose Melania the Clever each time, and got her for his wife, and lived happily for some time with the King of the Sea.

One day the king ordered a great feast to be spread with all manner of good things to eat, enough for a thousand people, and *then* sufficient would remain for another grand dinner. When all was ready, he told the young prince to finish up everything, without leaving a morsel on any of the plates and dishes, or he would be severely punished.

“Little father!” said the cunning young prince to the King of the Sea, “I have an old man, a very great friend, whom I brought with me. Can he have a little of the good things as well as I?”

“Very well, let him come; but he must not have much.” So the prince told Eat-All to make his appearance, which he did, and ate up everything that was on the table, and asked for more.

After this the King of the Sea ordered all the wines and spirits he could possibly think of to be brought in large casks, and told the young married couple to drink every drop, or he would have them punished.

“Little father!” said the young prince again, “may we ask an old man, whom I brought with me, to join us?”

“Yes, let him come!”

And in came Drink-All, who at a draught drank off every cask of wine and spirits, and then asked for more.

When the King of the Sea saw that nothing could be done with the young prince, whom he wanted to get rid of, he felt very angry; at last he thought of something that might finish him. He ordered an iron bath to be heated full of boiling water; when this



was ready, and the bath was so hot that the walls in the bath-room cracked, and the iron became red from the great heat, the prince was told to go and bathe himself.

“Very well, little father,” he answered ; “but may I ask an old friend whom I brought with me to the palace to join me ?”

“Certainly !” laughed the king ; “let him join you by all means, though I don’t suppose he will like it !”

The prince then told Chill-All to come with him. The moment this hero came into the bath-room, he blew on to the coals till there was no heat left in them ; he blew on to the boiling water, and it became cool ; he blew about till icicles hung about the room, and then the young prince got into the water, and had a pleasant bath. When he returned to his wife, Melania the Clever, she went up to him and said,—

“Let us leave the king, my father, for he is very angry with you, and hates you more than ever. Let us fly, my prince, before anything dreadful happens.”

“Very well, let us go ; I have no objection !” the prince replied.

So they harnessed their ponies, and rode off into the green fields. On they went for a long, long time ; at last Melania the Clever said,—

“Get off from your pony, my prince, and put your ear to the ground, and listen whether any one is chasing us or not ?”

The prince obeyed.

“I can hear nothing, Melania !” he answered.

But Melania the Clever was not satisfied, so she got off her horse, and put her ear to the ground.

"Why, my prince!" she exclaimed, "I hear a very active chase!"

She at once changed the ponies into a dark and dreary forest, herself she changed into a well, and the prince into an old peasant. Hardly had she done this when up rode some hunters.

"Hey, old man!" they cried; "have you seen a handsome youth and a beautiful damsel ride this way?"

"I did, my good brothers!" answered the prince; "but that was an age ago. They rode past when I was quite a young fellow, and before this forest grew to be what it now is!"

When the hunters heard this, they thought it useless to go any farther, so they returned to the King of the Sea, saying,—

"We could not find the young people, Your Majesty. The only person we met was an old peasant standing beside a well, in a dark forest."

"Why did you not bring him with you?" cried the king. He had the hunters killed at once, and sent off others in search of the fugitives.

As soon as Melania the Clever heard the pursuit, she changed herself into an old church, and the prince into an old priest. The hunters came up.

"Hey, old father!" they cried; "have you seen a handsome youth come this way, with a beautiful maiden?"

"Yes, my brothers; but that was a long, long time ago, when I was a young man, and when I began building this church, which is now so old that it won't be able to stand much longer; it is all rotten and cracked."

And these hunters also turned back, and went to the king their master, saying,—

“No, Your Majesty, we did not come across the young couple; the only person we saw was an old priest, standing near a rotten old church!”

“Why on earth did you not bring the church and the priest with you, you idiots?”

And the king ordered these unfortunate hunters to be killed like the others; after that he mounted his good steed, and galloped off himself in pursuit. This time when Melania the Clever heard her father coming after them, she changed the ponies into rivers of mead, with banks of jelly, while she changed the prince and herself into two ducks. When the king arrived, he commenced to eat the jelly and drink the mead as fast as ever he could, until he burst, and gave up the ghost!

The prince and Melania the Clever then went on farther. When they were quite close to the palace in which the prince's parents lived, Melania said,—

“Go on in front, my prince, and tell your father and mother the news of your marriage, while I wait for you here; but mark my words, you may embrace your parents as much as you like, but on no account kiss your sister, or you will forget all about me.”

The prince promised to obey, and went on. When he arrived at the palace, he embraced his parents, and, forgetting what his wife had told him, he also kissed his sister; but he had hardly done so when he quite forgot all about the beautiful Melania his wife.

Melania meanwhile waited three whole days, but on the fourth she changed herself into a beggar-girl

and went into the town, where she met an old woman whom she accompanied home to her hut.

After a while the prince decided on marrying a very rich young queen ; this was proclaimed throughout the kingdom, and it was also ordered that every Christian person should come and congratulate the bride and bridegroom, and bring with them a home-made cake as a gift.

Now the old woman with whom Melania the Clever was staying, set to work to sift the flour and bake a cake.

“For whom are you making that cake, little mother ?” said Melania.

“For whom ? Why, I should have thought that you had heard the news ! Our good king’s son is going to marry a rich young queen, and we have all of us to bake a cake, and give it to the young couple as a gift.”

“Then let me also bake one, and take it to the palace ; perhaps the king may reward me.”

“By all means, my dear ; I don’t see why you should not !”

So Melania took some flour, kneaded the dough, and putting two little doves in, made a cake.

When the hour arrived, the old woman and Melania the Clever went to the palace with their cakes, where there was a great feast. When Melania’s cake was brought on the table, the prince began to cut it, but hardly had he done so, when out flew the two doves, one of which had a little piece of the cake in her mouth.

“My dear little dove !” said her mate ; “give me a little of the cake !”

"No, I won't," replied the other, "or you will forget me just as the prince forgot his wife, Melania the Clever."

Hardly had the dove said these words, when the prince suddenly remembered his wife, and springing from the table caught Melania in his arms, and embraced her long and tenderly. He introduced Melania to his parents and friends, and after having explained everything, he made her take a seat beside him, and the feast was continued right merrily !

From that day forth the young couple lived together with every kind of happiness.

## THE LAST OF THE RUSSIAN WARRIORS.

*(Adapted from a Russian Ballad.)*

THE sun was just beginning to set, when, towards the great river of Saffat, came galloping seven adventurous Russian champions: the seven famous warriors, Godenko Bludovitch, Vasselie Kazemirovitch, Vasselie Buslaevitch, Ivan, the innkeeper's son, Aleyosha Papovitch, junior, Dobrenin the Youthful, and last, but not least, the stout labourer, Nikita Gregorevitch.

Right in front of them lay a level plain, in the midst of which stood an ancient oak; from this tree went three roads, the one leading to Novgorod the Great, the second to the sacred city of Kiev, and the third, which was very long and straight, led to the dark blue sea; but this road was dangerous, as it had for the last thirty-three years been in the possession of a savage giant Mussulman, who killed every one that dared to come near him, whether on horseback or on foot.

The warriors halted when they reached the oak, and pitched their white canvas tents. After allowing their steeds to walk about and eat the long green grass at their leisure, they went into their tents to seek repose.

Dobrenin the Youthful rose early with the sun, while his companions were still sleeping peacefully.

He bathed himself in the cool refreshing waters of the Saffat river, and after praying to an ancient picture, he looked around him and beheld, beyond the river of Saffat, a white canvas tent, in which lived the wicked Mussulman. Dobrenin saddled his coal-black steed with a costly Circassian saddle; he took his lance and sword, and mounted his charger's back. On rode Dobrenin, his horse neighing and prancing beneath him, until he at last reached the Mussulman's tent; he stopped and called out in a loud voice,—

“Come out of the tent, thou Tartar, thou wicked Mussulman thief! Come forward, and fight with me!”

The Mussulman, as soon as he heard these words, arose; and coming out of his white tent, mounted his noble horse and rode out to meet Dobrenin.

No winds blew, no clouds were seen, nothing but the flash of the bold champions' swords was visible. They fought and fought until their sharp lances broke, and their steel swords snapped asunder.

Then the warriors dismounted from their chargers, and continued the combat with their bare fists. Suddenly Dobrenin's foot slipped, his right hand trembled, and he fell down upon the damp ground. No sooner had he fallen than the Mussulman sprang upon him and killed him.

Up rose Aleyosha Papovitch, and leaving his companions fast asleep, went out to the Saffat river, and bathed himself in the cool, refreshing waters; and after praying to an ancient picture, he looked around him, and beheld Dobrenin's horse standing saddled and ready for riding, but looking

mournfully at the ground beneath him, he was grieving for his beloved master, Dobrenin the Youthful. Aleyosha Papovitch mounted the good steed, which at once commenced neighing and galloping as of old.

On, on rode Aleyosha Papovitch, until he arrived at the Mussulman's tent, in which lay the brave warrior Dobrenin the Youthful, with his eyes closed, his strong arms hanging lifeless by his sides, and covered with blood.

"Come out of thy tent, thou Tartar!" cried Aleyosha Papovitch, in a loud and angry voice. "Come out, and let us fight!"

Then the Mussulman answered and said,—

"Hail to thee, Aleyosha Papovitch, junior! Take my advice, my friend, and do not attempt to fight with me, for I am more powerful than thou supposest!"

But Aleyosha Papovitch laughed haughtily as he replied,—

"Do not boast! Wait till the fight is over before praising thyself!"

The Mussulman stepped out of his canvas tent, and mounted his splendid steed.

No winds blew, no clouds were seen, nothing but the flash of the warriors' swords was visible. They fought and fought until their sharp lances broke and their steel swords snapped asunder. They then dismounted from their chargers and continued the combat with their fists.

Aleyosha at last succeeded in overthrowing the Tartar, who fell down on the ground. Aleyosha im-



mediately sprang upon him and would have killed him, when down flew a large black crow and said in a man's voice,—

“Hail to thee, Aleyosha Papovitch, junior! Harken unto me, though I am but a big black crow. Do not deprive this Tartar of his life! Behold, I will fly to the dark blue sea, and fetch thee the water of life and the water of death, to sprinkle over the body of thy brother-warrior, Dobrenin. When thou sprinklest him with the water of death, his flesh will become white and whole again; but when thou sprinklest him over with the water of life, he will awake from his sleep of death.”

Aleyosha Papovitch consented to this, and the crow flew away, but soon returned, bringing with it the water of life and the water of death. Aleyosha sprinkled Dobrenin's body first with the water of death, and the flesh became white and whole; he then sprinkled it with the water of life, and Dobrenin awoke and got up. They then set the Tartar free, and returned to their brother warriors.

Early next morning, while all the others were fast asleep, Nikita Gregorevitch arose with the sun, and, as his two brothers had done before, bathed himself in the cold waters of the Saffat river; and after praying to his saint, he looked up, and beheld the Tartar giant crossing in a boat—the terrible Mussulman whom no one had yet been able to kill, whom no wolf dared approach, and over whom no bird had the power to fly; there he was quite close at hand! Nikita Gregorevitch cared nought for danger. The moment he saw the Mussulman, he called out in a loud voice to his

companions, who were sleeping so peacefully in their tents,—

“Wake up, mighty champions!” he cried. “Ye brave chosen warriors, arise, and let us defeat the Tartar giant!”

The warriors arose at their brother’s call, and mounting their chargers galloped off with Nikita to the Mussulman’s tent. They threw themselves with all their might upon the giant, attacking him with their swords and lances, while their good steeds tried to trample him under foot. Thus they fought for three whole hours and three whole minutes, at the end of which time they succeeded in overthrowing and killing the wicked Tartar giant. After having won the victory, the champions began to say boastfully,—

“We did our work nobly, we did not once shrink in the combat, nor did our good steeds attempt to run away, neither did our steel swords and lances break or bend!”

“Yes!” cried Aleyosha Papovitch, “we are brave and noble heroes; there is no one and nothing that we cannot kil’ or conquer! Bring even supernatural powers against us, and we will subdue *them!*”

Hardly had he uttered these foolish words, when two supernatural beings appeared, and cried out in voices which sounded like thunder,—

“Come on, brave champions! We invite the combat, though ye be seven, and we but two; let that not deter you!”

But the champions did not recognize the supernatural beings as such; and Aleyosha Papovitch,

heated by their address, mounted his horse and darting at them hewed them in twain ; hardly had he done so, when the parts became suddenly transformed into four mighty champions. Then Dobrenin rushed to the encounter, and felling these four to the ground, cut each in two. Then, to his surprise, up rose eight mighty champions fresh and strong. Nikita Gregorevitch now advanced, and like his brethren, hewed the eight in twain, thereby raising a double front of foes. The champions in a body now charged down, and hewing right and left cut down their enemies with might and main, but only to increase the number. For three whole days and nights, for three whole hours, for three whole minutes, did our seven brave champions continue hewing down the supernatural beings ; but without success, their enemies only continued increasing. At last their strength began to fail them, their noble steeds galloped off in all directions, and their steel swords and sharp lances began to break and bend ; but the enemy still increased. For some time our heroes would not yield ; but when they saw that the more they cut down the supernatural beings the more they increased, they became greatly alarmed and retreated up high rocks and into dark caverns for safety. But hardly had they reached the top of the rocks, then first one brave champion, then the other, was turned into stone.

And these were the last of the Russian warriors.

“IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, DON'T LISTEN;  
BUT DON'T SPOIL MY LIES.”<sup>1</sup>

THERE once lived three brothers, two of whom were clever, and the third was stupid. One day they went into the forest to cut wood, when it occurred to them that it would be a pleasant thing to have their meals there; so they put some grouts in a pot and then added some cold water, but when it came to the boiling they did not know whence to get the fire! Now it so happened that not very far from where they were was a hut, in which lived an old man who kept bees. The eldest brother, remembering this, said,—

“I will go and ask that old man for some fire to boil our porridge with.”

Away he went to the hut where he found the old man looking after his bees.

“Little father!” said the young fellow, “give me some fire!”

“Sing me a song first,” replied the old man.

“I cannot sing, little father.”

“Well then, let me see you dance.”

“I can't dance!”

“Well then, go and send some one who can, somebody who is not quite such an ass as you.”

So the eldest returned to his brothers without the fire.

<sup>1</sup> A Russian proverb.

“What a donkey you are to be sure!” cried the second brother. “Fancy coming back without any fire after all! Let me go, *I* shall be sure to bring it in a moment!”

So off he went, and on arriving at the hut he said to the old man,—

“Give me some fire, little father!”

“First sing me a song.”

“I can’t; I never learnt singing.”

“Well then, tell me a story.”

“I can’t, little father; I know nothing!”

“Well then, send somebody who is more clever than you, and who understands something.”

So this one also returned to his brothers, and the two *clever* ones sat looking at each other, wondering what they had best do.

Meanwhile the fool of the family looked at his brothers and laughed to himself,—

“They call themselves clever, indeed; but yet could not get the fire!” So he went to the hut to try *his* luck.

“Have you got any fire to spare, little father?” asked the fool.

“Yes, my boy; but first of all you must let me see you dance!”

“I can’t dance, little father.”

“Well then, tell me a story!”

“Ah, that is more in my line! Come outside and sit upon the hurdle which is lying on the ground near the door, and I will tell you a story. But do not interrupt me; if you do—then you must give me a hundred roubles. Do you understand?”

“Yes, my son!”

So they went out, and the old man seated himself on the hurdle near his door, while the fool sat down opposite him and began his tale.

“I had once a little piebald pony; I seated myself on him one fine day and rode off into the forest to cut wood. I had stuck my axe into my belt behind me, and as the pony ran the axe kept on knocking the unfortunate little creature on his back, until it cut him right in two! Are you listening, little father?”

“Yes, yes, my son!”

“Well, I rode on and on in this way for three whole years, until what should I see but the hinder part of my horse near a lake! I dismounted, and after catching it I sewed the two halves together, and rode on for another three years. Are you listening, little father?”

“Yes, yes, my son!”

“I rode and rode, until I came to a forest, where I saw a tremendously high tree. I climbed up this tree, higher and higher, until I came to the next world. After having looked about me, I found out that the cattle was wonderfully cheap about there, but the flies and mosquitoes were dreadfully dear; so I came down again to the earth, and after catching some bags full of flies and mosquitoes I climbed up to the next world again, where I disposed of them, and got in exchange a great number of cattle, so many in fact that it was impossible to count them all! Well, I collected all these sheep and oxen, and drove them to the place from which I had descended before;

but when I looked over the edge of the cloud I found that the big tree was there no longer, it had evidently been cut down. I was greatly troubled in my mind, and began to wonder what I had better do, how I could best descend. At last I decided to make a rope and let myself down ; to do this I had to cut up the cattle. When I had made a very long strap I began to descend ; down, down I went until I came to the end of the strap, and then I found that it was not long enough, another piece of skin much longer than your hut is high was wanting, and I did not care to jump it, for I was afraid. Are you listening, little father ?”

“Yes, yes, my son ; go on !”

“Well, just as I was hanging there a very high wind arose and began blowing me about from one place to another, first to Moscow, then to St. Petersburg, until the strap broke and I was thrown into the mire, where I sunk and sunk so deep that at last nothing but my head remained above the surface. I tried to get out but could not, I had to stop in that position for a very long time, unable to move or do anything. At last a wild duck built her nest upon my head, and I could do nothing to prevent it! One day a wolf who was walking about in the fields came up to the nest on my head, and commenced eating the eggs. I somehow managed to free my hand from the mire, and seizing the wolf by the tail, yelled out as loud as ever I could, ‘Too-loo-loo-who!’ And he ran off dragging me out after him. Are you listening, little father ?”

“Yes, yes, my son !”

The fool felt rather disgusted ; he had finished his story, but the old man had kept his word and had not interrupted him once. What was he to do to get the hundred roubles out of him as well as the fire? At last he thought he would try and tease him, so he began a new story.

“I have a document in my possession, old man, showing that your father will for ever have to pay his debts to my father for having used forged documents, and—”

“That is a lie!” cried the old man, interrupting the story; “it is more likely that *your* father will for ever have to pay his debts to *my* father!”

The fool laughed; it was just what he wanted, and just what he expected. He took the fire and the hundred roubles from the old man, and returned to his brothers. They then hung the pot of porridge by means of a tripod over the fire, and when it was ready they wisely set to work to eat it up. And this is the end of our story.



### THE LITTLE BROWN COW.

IN a certain kingdom lived and reigned a king and queen who had an only daughter, the beautiful young Princess Marie. Now it so happened that the queen died and the king married again. His second wife had three daughters, who were very remarkable to look upon; the eldest of them had only one eye, the second two, and the third and youngest of them had—three.

The step-mother, of course, took a violent dislike to the young Princess Marie. She hated her for her beauty, and tried all she could to spoil her good looks and make her less attractive. She clothed her in the oldest dresses she could find, and gave her as little as she could to eat, in order to starve her. She would send the young princess into the fields dressed like a maid-of-all-work, and tell her to look after a favourite little brown cow; but she would never give her anything to take with her to eat, except a piece of dry bread. However, the princess did not mind all this. When she went into the green fields to look after the little cow, she would get in at the animal's right ear and out at its left. As soon as she had done this, her shabby clothes would change into rich and beautiful garments, and she would find plenty to eat and drink provided; then she would walk

about after the little brown cow, richly attired ; but as soon as the day drew to an end, she would jump in at the little cow's left ear and out at its right, and return home to the palace dressed in her usual shabby clothes, bringing the piece of dry bread back to her step-mother.

"I wonder how she manages to have enough?" thought the step-mother to herself.

At last the step-mother could stand it no longer. She was very curious to know how Princess Marie contrived to get through the day without eating the piece of dry bread she had given her. So she called her eldest daughter, with the one eye, and said,—

"Go into the fields with Princess Marie, and see what she does with herself to keep off hunger?"

The two girls went together into the green fields, and sat down on the grass. "Go to sleep, my dear sister," said Princess Marie, "and I will sing you a song."

So the one-eyed maiden made herself as comfortable as she possibly could upon the grass, while Princess Marie murmured to herself,—

"Don't look, little eye ; but go to sleep !" And then she commenced singing until her sister fell fast asleep. Princess Marie then arose, and climbing into the little cow's right ear and out at the left was clad in the beautiful garments again. After having plenty to eat and drink, she walked about after the little brown cow. When evening came, Princess Marie got in at the animal's left ear and out at its right, and was once more in her shabby clothes. She went up to her sleeping sister and woke her.

"Get up, sister mine," she said ; "it is time to return home !"

"Dear me !" exclaimed the sister in alarm ; "I have been fast asleep all the time, and have seen nothing. Shan't I catch it, when I get back to my mother."

She did. When she came home her mother said, "What did Princess Marie eat and drink ?"

"I do not know ; I saw nothing."

The mother flew into a dreadful rage ; but on the following morning she sent her second daughter, Two-Eyes, into the fields, saying,—

"Go with Princess Marie, and watch her. See what it is she eats and drinks ?"

Away went the two girls into the green fields to look after the little brown cow.

"Sit down on the grass, dear sister mine," said Princess Marie, "and let me sing you to sleep."

Two-Eyes lay down upon the grass, while the beautiful princess whispered to herself : "Don't watch, little eyes, but both go to sleep ! Sleep away, sleep away, sister mine !" Then the princess began to sing, and her sister fell asleep till the evening, having seen nothing all the time, so that she also came in for a severe scolding on her return home.

Next morning the step-mother sent her youngest daughter, Three-Eyes, after Princess Marie, saying : "Go, my dear, and find out what Princess Marie eats and drinks."

When the maidens came to the green fields, Princess Marie said : "Sit down on the green grass, my sister, and let us have a chat !"

The girls sat down, and Princess Marie said to her-

self: "Close, little eyes, and both go to sleep!" But she forgot all about the third eye; so two of the eyes went to sleep, while the third was wide-awake and saw Princess Marie run up to the little brown cow and climb in at its right ear, and come out of its left, beautifully dressed, and then set to work to eat and drink all kinds of good things, after which she walked about and looked after the little brown cow, until the evening, when she came up to her supposed sleeping sister and woke her, saying,—

"Get up, dear sister, for it is time to go home!"

When they returned to the palace, Princess Marie gave the piece of dry bread back to her step-mother, and left the room.

"Well," asked the wicked queen of her three-eyed daughter, "did you see what Princess Marie ate and drank?" Three-Eyes at once told her mother everything that she had seen with her third eye. When the queen heard all, she at once sent for the cook, giving him the following order: "Go, man, and kill the little brown cow, and cut her into small pieces."

The cook obeyed; but as soon as Princess Marie heard what was going to be done to her pet animal, she ran into the fields and said to the cook: "If you must kill the little cow, give me at least her little heart."

This the cook did. The princess took it and planted it in the palace garden. In a very short time a bush grew in that very spot, covered with lovely sweet fruit, and a number of beautiful singing birds, which sang royal songs all day long, and sometimes even the songs of the peasants.

Now a certain young prince, by name Ivan, heard

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of this wonderful bush, and of the beautiful Princess Marie, who had planted it. So he went to the palace and saw the wicked queen, who at once asked him what he wanted.

The prince put a silver plate on the table, and said: "Whichever of the four damsels fills this plate full of the delicious fruit from the wonderful bush, shall be my wife." Now the cunning young prince well knew that no one but the fair Princess Marie could gather the fruit from that bush, for the singing birds would allow no one else to approach.

The queen sent her eldest daughter, One-Eye, to the bush to pluck the fruit; but the birds would not let her come near it, so she had to return without any, being afraid of losing her only eye! The step-mother then sent her two younger daughters; but they were just as unfortunate as their sister, the birds would not even let them have fruit of any kind.

There was nothing for it; the step-mother had at last to send Princess Marie for the fruit. The princess took the silver plate and went to the bush; she commenced gathering the delicious fruit, and all the little birds began helping her to fill up the plate. When it was quite full, she returned to the palace and gave it to the prince, who was delighted, and at once asked her to become his wife. Princess Marie made no objection, so the wedding feast was got ready, and everybody was happy, even the step-mother.

Prince Ivan, and his wife Princess Marie, lived in peace and plenty all their lives.





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